FAITH

AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

BY

JOHN LART.

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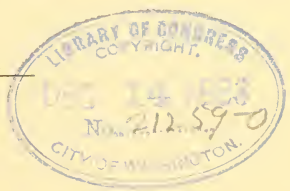

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sir Harry Maxton.

Captain Jack Beaumer.

Mr. Douglas, ... An old Artist.

Reuben Harleigh, ... A young Farmer.

Marks, ... A Lawyer.

Stratton, ... Captain Beaumer's Valet.

Farmer Wurzle,
Old Matthew,
Jeremiah,
Jim,
Jock,
Sam,
} ..... Farm Labourers.

Carrie Maxton, ... Sir Harry's Sister.

Maggie Douglas.

ACT I.
SUMMER.

ACT II.
CHRISTMAS EVE.

ACT III.
NEW YEARS EVE.

FAITH.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A corner of a hay field, separated from another field by a hedge running diagonally from* L. *front to* R. *back. Old oak tree* (*practical*) R. C. *In the distance is seen a small village with old church, &c. Old* MATTHEW *and other haymakers discovered at dinner, seated under tree, on haycocks, and in shadow of hedge.*

MAT. Now, doant 'ee be talkin' so rebellious loike, lads. I tell 'ee paarson said in sarmon Sunday as Adam — and Adam, mind 'ee, were most nigh the fust man on this 'ere yearth,— as Adam got his bread by the sweat o' his brow.

JERRY. (*With his mouth full.*) Haw! haw! haw!

JOCK. That beant nothun to do wi' we.

MAT. Paarson said so : and all folks mostly what be come arter he be bound to get their bread by the sweat o' their brows. Them be paarson's very words : and paarson be a good man and mighty larned.

JIM. Dang 'un, paarson be no better nor we. Beant he paid to preach a sarmon Sundays, same loike as us gets our wages, come Saturday, for cuttin' grass or pullin' turmuts?

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! Paarson pullin' turmuts! He! he!

JIM. (*Suppressing him.*) Shut up, Jerry.

JOCK. Aye, and if so be as every man ought to get his bread by sweat, and aint got no manner o' right to eat it onless he do sweat for't, what bizness be it o' they folk up at t' Hall to eat bread what he got by our sweat? Why doant paarson tell us that? That be logic, that be.

MAT. (*Scratching his head.*) Well—I doant knaw ezackly—'taint for me—but paarson, he do say as how the folks up at t' Hall be put on this 'ere yearth to fill a more insulted station, as the sayin' is : and he do say as how they's got the right to eat their bread wi'out sweatin' for't : and they wouldn't be doin' their duty nohow, and actin' right

accordin' to what they wos born for, if so be as they was to pull their own turmuts, and plough their own land loike. Them be paarson's very words, and paarson did ought to knaw summat.

JIM. Paarson, oi tell 'ee, be paid to say they things to we. Oi beant a goin' to stand it no longer. We beant what we was twenty year ago. We be gettin' our rights now: and why? 'Cos we beant the same as we was.

SAM. That be logic agin: and what's done it all? Eddication—that's what's done it. Beant we eddicated, and got noospapers and clubs and grammer, just loike they Hall folk? We be men now.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! We be men now. He! he!

MAT. They things be powerful difficult loike to argify. There beant no bottom to argiment; and it beant no good when you've got one leg in a bog to put t'other in to fetch t'other out: keep t'other on dry land, and mebbe t'other 'll be kind o' forced to work out agin: but put t'other in, and there beant no help for 'ee. Argiment be agin all natur, lads, that it be.

JIM. Old Mat aint got no proper pride.

MAT. (*Puzzled.*) Well—times be pretty much changed since I were a lad: there warnt none o' that there eddication then: but paarson—he do say as a man be one who do do his duty where he be put—high or low—and doant speak onrespectfull loike to they what be above him, or be harsh and uppish to they what be under him:—and a larned man and a scholard loike paarson——

JOCK. Scholards beant o' no account now. Gi' me eddication: eddication tells a man he aint got no one above him, and larns him not to demean hisself by bein' respectful to they what's got more money than him. Let's have a paarson what's more eddicated and beant sich a scholard, and we'll get better beer and more money.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! Eddication and beer! He! he!

JIM. Right yer are, Jock. I beant a goin' to sweat away no longer to fill other folks' bellies. I be goin' to Ameriky.

SAM. So be oi, Jim.

MAT. Ameriky? Why, Lor' love 'ee, lads, Ameriky be a powerful long way off, and I've heard tell as how you do have to go most nigh all the way by sea.

JIM. What o' that? Beant the sea as good as land for them as knaws the way?

MAT. It be powerful restless, lads—that there salt water be—and terrible onwholesome on the stummick: and I've heard say that when ye be took that way the finest bit o'biled bacon as ever wos, couldn't

tempt a man to make a hearty meal nohow.

SAM. We beant afeard o' that, be we, Jim?

MAT. Look 'ee here, lads—doant 'ee do't now, doant 'ee: it beant nateral. I be an old man—most nigh wore out, and ready to go—and I've knawed ye all when ye were bits o' brats—and it doant seem as how ye ought to 'eave t' old pleace, and go a temptin' o' Providence in they outlandish parts. Stay here, lads, among the fields and hedges of old England, and doant ye pay no heed to what folks tell 'ee about fortins in Ameriky.

JIM. England beant the only pleace in the world: it beant no more to we nor any other pleace.

MAT. (*Sadly.*) Beant it, lads, beant it? And where would ye find a better measter than Muster Harleigh?

JIM. There beant nothin' agin him. He be good enough—as measters go.

MAT. (*Earnestly.*) Then doant ye leave him, lads, doant 'ee—or mebbe ye'll find a hard measter in they furren parts, for all they tell 'ee. (*Yearningly.*) Wont ye listen to me, lads? I be most nigh wore out, and I doant knaw nothin' about rights and sich like onsettlin' things, and all the eddication that I knows be got in that there old church—which folks do say have stood five hundred year: but all round that means Home, lads—and there beant no word loike that nowheres else. Think o' the meanin' o 'that there word. It means the pleace where our feathers and mothers—and *their* feathers and mothers—were born and lived and died:—where we were born ourselves—where we played when we were boys—where we met our wives and sweethearts—where we were married, and our children christened. And when they die, and leave ye, lads—as all mine be dead—and ye've seen all ye've ever loved put cold and lifeless under the green grass—when ye can't see the old feaces no more, nor hear their voices, and ye're left all alone:—then ye think on 'em, lads, sleepin' close by under the shadow o' t' old church spire—a waitin' for ye to go to 'em there—and it seems as if they wasn't so very far away arter all, and could most nigh hear ye speakin' to 'em, if ye whisper to the ground that covers 'em. That's Home, lads—all round that—that's Home. And doant it seem like desertin' of 'em, to leave the land where they're all lyin' so peaceful, and go to strange pleaces? That doant seem nateral somehow, lads—do it?

(*The men murmur, and appear affected by Matthew's speech.*)

JIM. Doant mind what old Mat says: they words o' his doant mean nothin': we aint to be fooled loike that.

JOCK. Hush, lads—here comes Muster Harleigh: doant let him hear

us.

[*Enter* REUBEN HARLEIGH *and* CAPT. BEAUMER.]

HARLEIGH. Well, my men, have you got that hay carried yet?

MAT. Not all, Master Harleigh: the sun be powerful hot, and we be restin' a bit.

HARLEIGH. Well, get to work about it, lads; there'll be rain before to-morrow, and I must have it in to-night. Wait a bit, Matthew, I want to speak to you. (*The other men go off.*) Matthew, what is the matter with the men lately? Anything wrong?

MAT. Well, Muster Harleigh, they be all stirred up and flummoxed by a chap in the village who be tellin' 'em to leave England, and put their money into some land o' his in Ameriky.

HARLEIGH. Some swindler, eh?

MAT. Mebbe so: ony way, some on 'em swears they be agoin' there.

HARLEIGH. What do you think of it, Matthew?

MAT. What do I think on it? Why, Lor' love 'ee, Muster Reuben, it beant nothin' to I. Not even they tally-foams as they talk of could move I from t' old pleace, and, please God, I'll be buried in t' old churchyard yonder. (*Confidentially*). Muster Reuben, it be all along o' eddication: they lads be powerful eddicated.

BEAUMER. Aw—verwy extwaordinarwy.

HARLEIGH. Education unsettles them, eh, Matthew?

MAT. Lor' love 'ee, sir, it be wus nor gunpowder to 'em; and it beant o' no kind o' use for I, nor you, nor this gentleman here, mebbe, who beant eddicated, to say nothin' to 'em.

BEAUMER. Aw! Good gwacious!

HARLEIGH. If they have any complaint, why don't they come to me? I try to deal fairly with them.

MAT. Bless 'ee, Muster Reuben, doant I knaw it? Aint I turned up these here furrows, seventy year and more, for t' old measter: and when he died and the land come to you, didn't you keep me on, though I knaws it weren't becuse I were o' much use no more, bein' most nigh wore out. I aint forgot it, sir: God bless 'ee, I aint forgot it.

HARLEIGH. That's all right, Mat, that's nothing. There, there, go up to the farm, and take a basket that you'll find there down to Mr. Douglas.

MAT. Thank 'ee, sir: but old Matthew doant forget—he doant forget: pretty nigh wore out—but he doant forget.

[*Exit* MATTHEW.

BEAUMER. Aw—who is that wemarkable old wustic?

HARLEIGH. Old Matthew, the patriarch of the farm : one of the old school : he believes in me as an Arab does in his horse.

BEAUMER. Aw—so do I.

HARLEIGH. Do what, Jack?

BEAUMER. Believe in you.

HARLEIGH. Of course you do, old fellow. I believe in you.

BEAUMER. Weally? I don't.

HARLEIGH. Don't what?

BEAUMER. Believe in me. I want you to help me.

HARLEIGH. What about, Jack?

BEAUMER. I'm going to get marwied.

HARLEIGH. What? Again?

BEAUMER. Eh?

HARLEIGH. I mean it's all right this time—you haven't made a mistake are you sure you're in love?

BEAUMER. Ya-as.

HARLEIGH. Well, I'm awfully glad, old fellow. Do I know the lady?

BEAUMER. Yaas—verwy well.

HARLEIGH. Who is it? Miss Maxton?

BEAUMER. No. Miss Douglas.

HARLEIGH. (*Starting.*) Who? Miss Douglas—Maggie Douglas?

BEAUMER. Yaas—I think so.

HARLEIGH. Think so? Hang it, Jack, don't you know?

BEAUMER. No.

HARLEIGH. No? Why, you must know. Did she say she would marry you?

BEAUMER. No.

HARLEIGH. Did she say she would think about it?

BEAUMER. No.

HARLEIGH. Did she say she wouldn't marry you?

BEAUMER. No.

HARLEIGH. Then what in the world did she say when you asked her?

BEAUMER. Haven't asked her.

HARLEIGH. Not asked her?

BEAUMER. No.

HARLEIGH. (*Relieved and laughing.*) Why, what a queer fellow you are, Jack : you tell me you are going to be married, mention the lady's name, and all the while you haven't even asked her.

BEAUMER. There's the wub.

HARLEIGH. I should think so: but what do you want me to do?

BEAUMER. Ask her for me.

HARLEIGH. What? Ask Miss Douglas if she—oh, come, Jack, you're joking.

BEAUMER. No, weally.

HARLEIGH. Why don't you ask her yourself?

BEAUMER. I'm afwaid.

HARLEIGH. Such an old hand as you, Jack? Why, this must be the fourth time, isn't it?—third or fourth, I know.

BEAUMER. Fifth.

HARLEIGH. And yet you are afraid?

BEAUMER. Yaas. I want you to bweak the ice a bit.

HARLEIGH. Jack, I can't do it.

BEAUMER. Do, there's a good fellah.

HARLEIGH. No, Jack, it's impossible. The fact is—a—Miss Douglas and I have—a—that is—I mean we have quarrelled—don't speak, and—a—all that. Don't you see, Jack, it wouldn't do at all.

BEAUMER. Aw—that's a gweat bore.

HARLEIGH. Yes, it is rather a nuisance.

BEAUMER. Would you wecommend me to twy and do it myself?

HARLEIGH. I think it would be much better, Jack.

BEAUMER. Honestly?

HARLEIGH. Honestly.

BEAUMER. Aw—verwy well—I think I'll twy.

HARLEIGH. Do, old fellow, and—I say, Jack, there's Miss Douglas in the next field. Ask her at once, and get it off your mind.

BEAUMER. At once? Good gwacious, no. Weuben, this wequires gweat weflection. I must wetire, and weturn pwesently—and then pwesently—yaas—good-bye.

[*Exit* BEAUMER *hurriedly.*

HARLEIGH. (*Alone.*) In love with Maggie Douglas! Did he mean it, or was he joking? No, he meant it, and why shouldn't he? There's nothing wonderful in it: who could see Maggie without loving her? Don't I love her myself? Isn't she dearer to me than the whole world—dearer than life itself? But does she love him? Who knows? That show of carelessness and fashion is but a cloak that hides an honest heart that many a girl might think worth winning. Heigho! Have I been a fool, building a house of sand, and peopling it with dreams that never can be else than dreams? What am I?—a rough country fellow with the smell of the fields about me: and may be it isn't for such as Maggie to mate with me:—may be I've got no right to

think of her like that. But I do think of her—I think of nothing else—work for nothing else. But would she be content with my life? Yes, God bless her, if she loved me. I'll ask her, and if she should say "yes" there'll be no king upon his throne more proud than Reuben Harleigh: and if it should be "no"—why then—then—God bless her still. It shall be as she says. [*Exit* HARLEIGH.

[*Enter old* DOUGLAS, *with easel and painting materials, &c., supported by* MAGGIE *and* MATTHEW. *They place him in shade of hedge.*]

MAGGIE. There, father dear, sit down here, and rest a little. The heat is too much for you.

MAT. Aye, sir, sit 'ee down, do. The sun be powerful hot to-day.

DOUGLAS. Thank you—yes, I did feel a little faint. It will soon pass off.

MAT. Put 'un in the shade, miss. T' old gentleman beant so strong and resistful loike a us be, and the sun do get down the back o' his neck and strike powerful hard on the spinals.

MAGGIE. Is that comfortable, dear?

DOUGLAS. Thanks, Maggie—yes, that's very nice. I was walking too fast.

MAT. He'll come to himself all right, miss: don't you be afeard. He were walkiing powerful fast and active for a old gentleman: and he were carryin' a putty heavy load o' they paint brushes and bits o' calico nailed on window frames, and that there trassel work wi' three legs—loike what he leans 'em agin when he be a paintin' of 'em.

MAGGIE. You mean his canvas and easel.

MAT. Aye, miss, loike enough—as you do say, careless and easy. But it be too much for a old gentleman loike he. It beant none o' my bizness, miss, if you'll excuse me for sayin' so, but a kibbidge leaf, or one o' they big docks, put in the crown o' yer hat, be a powerful savin' o' the head on a hot day.

DOUGLAS. Thanks, my friend: I will take your advice next time.

MAT. Aye, do 'ee now, do 'ee: that'll be powerful kind of 'ee—a kibbidge leaf, or one o' they big docks, in the crown o' yer hat. Well, I be bound to go now, miss: there be a sight o' work to do to-day: and if ye'll put that dock leaf in the crown o' yer hat, Muster Douglas, it'll be powerful kind o' 'ee—or a kibbidge—thank 'ee—powerful kind. [*Exit* MATTHEW.

MAGGIE. Now, father, you are to lie still and get a little sleep, if you can, while I finish this sketch.

DOUGLAS. But I don't feel sleepy, Madge; I am better now, and I have something to say to you.

MAGGIE. You are not to talk any more: I am sure I know exactly

what you want to say—that my last study of still-life is fearfully out of drawing, or something equally disagreeable, you dear old scold.

DOUGLAS. I wasn't thinking of still-life then, Maggie ; it's not that, little woman.

MAGGIE. What can it be, then? I'm sure I can't guess I'll give you just two minutes.

DOUGLAS. I was thinking, Maggie, of the more mysterious and solemn study of life and death—of the great future, where, behind the sombre curtain of death, is the canvas that each has covered, well or ill, with the work of a life time.

MAGGIE. Ah, I know now. You are thinking of beginning some new great work—something sublime and grand—that shall take the world of art by storm.

DOUGLAS. I was thinking rather of the *ending* of a work that will move the world no more than would the falling of an ear of wheat before old Matthew's sickle.

MAGGIE. (*Anxiously.*) How solemnly you speak, dear. Why do you talk like this?

DOUGLAS. Because, Madge, there comes a time in all our lives when we must put our house in order—when the paint will dry upon the palette, and the brush lie idle—when—when it becomes too dark to work, and there is nothing for us but to fold our hands—and—and—

MAGGIE. Oh, father dear, and what?

DOUGLAS. — Rest, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Rest? Not—not die, father? No, no, not that.

DOUGLAS. Don't be frightened, little woman. You see ours is a short-lived race. Our ancestors lived fast and merrily ; and, as they left little money for those who came after, probably thought it only considerate to damage the family constitution as much as possible, lest the duration of our lives should be longer than our purses.

MAGGIE. There, I knew you were only talking to tease me. How foolish I was. See, you are smiling at me now.

DOUGLAS. But I am not, Maggie. I am really serious.

MAGGIE. (*Earnestly.*) Father, you are not keeping anything back from me? You would not do that, dear, would you?

DOUGLAS. No ; that is why I want you to listen.

MAGGIE. I will : but I am sure it is only the heat that has affected you to-day, is it not, father? Say it is only the heat.

DOUGLAS. Perhaps that may be all—to-day. But there are other times when—I am not strong, and I thought it wise to take better advice : so when I was in London I saw Dr. Cranforth—(*pauses*).

MAGGIE. Yes, dear?

DOUGLAS. And he told me that—that—(*hesitating*).

MAGGIE. —that you would be all right, if you would only take care of yourself?

DOUGLAS No, Maggie, no: not "all right" exactly. He told me that with proper care I might live—

MAGGIE. —*might* live, father? Oh!

DOUGLAS. —might live two years—perhaps more.

MAGGIE. Two years? Live only two years—And after that—after that, father—to—

DOUGLAS. We are in God's hands, my child, and must be ready when he calls us.

MAGGIE. (*Throwing herself upon his neck.*) Oh, no, no, my dear darling old father, it cannot be as soon as that—it cannot be. I have never thought of this.

DOUGLAS. Death has no terror for me, Maggie: it is not death I dread. It is the thought of leaving you to fight alone against the world —to face alone the poverty and want that we have faced together. The thought of this is ever present with me like a haunting spectre: it robs me of all rest: it comes before me in the dead of night, and taunts me with my helplessness: it glares upon me in the day time with the fierceness of that burning sun, and turns me sick and faint. Oh, Madge, if such a time should ever come to you when I am gone, I do not think the grave itself could give me rest. Oh, no, it is not death I dread: there are worse things than death.

MAGGIE. I cannot bear to hear you speak like this—I cannot bear it.

DOUGLAS. Hush! No, it was foolish of me. Let us be calm, and look the future in the face. When I shall be gone—

MAGGIE. I shall die too: I could not live without you.

DOUGLAS. When I—when this—when the end comes, I could close my eyes and fall asleep more quietly if I knew that you were cared for lovingly, and shielded from the hardships of the world.

MAGGIE. As the world has been cruel and hard to you, dear, so let it be to me.

DOUGLAS. If I could but see you the loved and happy wife of an honest man—

MAGGIE. Whom do I want but you, dear? Have you not been to me father, mother, brother and husband, all in one? And, oh, how could I think of any other now, when the time may be so short?

DOUGLAS. It is because it may be short that I would have you think of it. Madge, is there any one whom you could trust, any one for

whom your heart beats faster than the rest—any one whom you could love?

MAGGIE. I do not know—I cannot tell—I never thought—

DOUGLAS. Think of it now, Madge: think of it if you would give me peace and rest: think of it for your poor old father's sake. Will you promise me to think of it?

MAGGIE. Yes, dear, if it will make you happier.

DOUGLAS. Yes, yes, it will—it does—it does. (*Exhausted.*)

MAGGIE. Father, you must not talk any more. Try and sleep a little. Do, please, will you?

DOUGLAS. Yes, yes, Maggie—I will—I will—I feel sleepy now—but better—much better—only tired and sleepy.

[DOUGLAS *falls asleep gradually.*

MAGGIE. Oh, can it be true? Is the end indeed as near as this? Am I blind not to have seen him growing weaker month by month? No, I have seen it—I have: his hands are thinner—more transparent than they were—his step more feeble, and our walks together have grown shorter than they used to be—his work is now a labor, not the pleasure that it was. And he will die—in two short years—he so full of love and kindness for every one—so gentle and patient to those who have been hard and cruel to him all his life—so cheery and hopeful when the days were dark—so generous in act and thought—so uncomplaining in his suffering. To die? And I?—alone? No, no, I will not believe it: it shall not be. Shall not? Oh, what am I, to think I can defy this mighty enemy, Death? Nothing. It must be, if God wills it so, and I must learn to bear it. Yes, I will be brave, as he is: but—it is hard—oh, so very hard. (*Bursts into sobs.*)

[*Enter* REUBEN HARLEIGH.]

HARLEIGH. Maggie!

MAGGIE. Hush, Reuben: my father is asleep. Don't wake him.

HARLEIGH. Asleep, here? And you—you have been crying. What is it for? Isn't he well.

MAGGIE. I am afraid not;—and oh, Reuben, he talks of death and of leaving me—and I cannot bear it.

HARLEIGH. Things can't be as bad as that, Maggie: don't be cast down. Why, there isn't a healthier spot in the whole of England than this. See how quiet and peaceful it all looks, and how everything around us is breathing health and life.

MAGGIE. Yes, it is very lovely: it is a dear old place, and we have been so very happy here.

HARLEIGH. It *is* a dear old place; to me there is none like it.

MAGGIE. In the country one can see the world as God created it. London is a great and mighty piece of work—the work of man—and man is the idol that man worships nowadays: but, oh, how cruel, how hard! Child as I was, I can remember how cold and hard it used to be to us. Even the hearts of those of our own blood—my father's brother—were turned to stone, and closed themselves to our despair.

HARLEIGH. But that was years ago: it is past and buried; you must not think of it now.

MAGGIE. How can I help it, Reuben? And if I could forget, I would not, for it makes me think of all your goodness to my father and myself. But for your generous help in our distress and poverty, where might we be now?—back again, toiling in a London garret, broken in health and spirit—perhaps dead.

HARLEIGH. Don't talk so, Maggie, please don't. (*Hesitatingly.*) I—I've been wanting to speak to you for a long time, but—somehow I couldn't find the words to say, and—will you listen to me now, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Of course, Reuben—now, and always.

HARLEIGH. (*Hesitating.*) Well, Maggie, I've been thinking—I hardly know how to tell you—but I've been thinking of getting—married.

MAGGIE. Married, Reuben?

HARLEIGH. Aye: when a man loves a girl, he thinks of that—generally. I am only a farmer, Maggie; but I've got enough laid by to ask a wife to share with me—and—

MAGGIE. And you have kept all this a secret from me?

HARLEIGH. Well, Maggie, you see it didn't come easy to me—I didn't seem to have the words—and I was afraid of offending you. But now—now I've got to tell you; I can't keep silent any longer.

MAGGIE. I hope you will be very happy, Reuben.

HARLEIGH. Maggie—would you—do you think you—? I know I'm only a farmer, the son of a farmer; but our name is known round here for miles, and there isn't a man that can say a word to make me blush for it. I am a rough sort of a fellow, but there's many a false heart hidden by a smooth smile and a dainty speech, and many an honest one that beats beneath a shabby coat; and many a lass that has been won by a dainty speech has come to wish, years after, that she could lay her head to rest upon the shabby coat.

MAGGIE. Yes, I know; and there must be many girls who would be proud to be your wife.

HARLEIGH. There's only one, Maggie—there's only one in the

whole of this wide world; and if she says "no," why then there'll be no other—ever. Oh, Maggie, you don't know what it is to have your whole heart filled with love for some one, and yet not to dare to speak of it for fear of frightening her away. You don't know what it is to go home at night, when you've been working hard all day, and fancy you can see her you love so dearly waiting for you in the porch—her that you've been thinking about all day, and working for. That's what I've been doing.

MAGGIE. And you will see her, Reuben; I am sure you will.

HARLEIGH. (*Eagerly.*) Will I? Tell me, Maggie, will I see her I love?

MAGGIE. But I don't know who she is: you haven't told me.

HARLEIGH. Not know—not know who she is? Why—why, it's you—it's you, of course, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Oh, Reuben.

HARLEIGH. Aye, whom else should it be? It is you whom I have loved almost from the very first day I saw you—you of whom I think when working hard—it is your face that I fancy looks for me when I go home—yours that has gazed with me into the winter fire, and made the room seem brighter than it ever was before. Don't tell me it was only a dream, Maggie; tell me you are not offended.

MAGGIE. Offended? Oh, no.

HARLEIGH. God bless you for those words.

MAGGIE. I do indeed value the honor you have done me, Reuben.

HARLEIGH. Honor, Maggie? No, don't you speak like that. I am the one who will be proud if you will let me call you wife.

MAGGIE. You know there is no one but my father whom I care for more than you; but—oh, why have you spoken of this now?

HARLEIGH. Have I not waited long enough, Maggie? It seems as if I had waited all my life. Won't you say "yes"?

MAGGIE. I don't know what to say.

HARLEIGH. Never mind the words, Maggie: the lips can't always say what the heart feels. It is only a little word I want—three little letters—and yet they will be dearer to me than the whole world besides.

MAGGIE. You have always been so good and kind, and you must think me so ungrateful.

HARLEIGH. (*As if wounded by the word.*) Ungrateful? Ah!

MAGGIE. We have done so little in return.

HARLEIGH. Oh, why speak of this? These are cold words when one asks for love. Do you think that it is gratitude I am asking for—that I am mean and cowardly enough to ask your love as a return for the little use I may have been to you?

MAGGIE. Oh, no.

HARLEIGH. God knows I would not do a thing like that. Dearly as I prize it, I would win, not buy, your love.

MAGGIE. Oh, Reuben, I did not mean that.

HARLEIGH. Gratitude? Yes, I should have thought of that before. I should have known that you were noble enough to sacrifice yourself to pay what you think to be a debt of gratitude, and make me happy. Forgive me for my blindness, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Oh, I have nothing to forgive: you do not understand.

HARLEIGH. Yes, I think I understand. That word "ungrateful" has told me all. It was thoughtless and cruel of me—I should have waited longer before I spoke—I had no right to ask until I felt sure of your love. It was not fair—it was unmanly; but I never knew.

MAGGIE. Oh, Reuben. I never meant that you should understand it so.

HARLEIGH. No, no, I know you didn't, Maggie; but I can see it now. Don't feel grieved about it; I have waited a long time, but I can wait a bit longer. And then I'll come and ask you again—and perhaps you'll think of it, and try—and try to care for me a little bit, eh, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Yes, oh yes, Reuben, I will try; but I didn't mean—

HARLEIGH. God bless you, Maggie, I know. I'll wait a bit, and then I'll——(*going*).

MAGGIE. Reuben, don't go yet—wait;—I——

HARLEIGH. Yes, yes, let me go; don't ask me to stay, Maggie; I can't do it just now; there's a bit of a lump in my throat, and—but don't you be grieved about it; it was my fault—there—all my fault. God bless you always. Good-bye.

[*Exit* HARLEIGH *hurriedly*.

MAGGIE. Gone! Oh, Reuben, Reuben, why could you not understand?

DOUGLAS. (*Talking in his sleep*.) Good lad—keep him, Maggie, keep him—fine fellow—don't let him go, Maggie—don't—don't—Ah! (*Wakes with a start*.)

MAGGIE. Father, father dear, you have been dreaming, haven't you?

DOUGLAS. Dreaming? No, no, I saw him, Maggie, I saw him; I heard him ask you—I heard you say—oh, no, tell me I was only dreaming, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Was it a dream, dear?

DOUGLAS. Ah, is it true? Reuben Harleigh—has he gone—have you sent him away?

MAGGIE. Did you want Reuben, dear? There he goes across the

field.

DOUGLAS. Gone! It is true then—he has been here—he has asked you to be his wife—and you—you have sent him away?

MAGGIE. Yes, dear, it is true.

DOUGLAS. Oh, Maggie, Maggie, how could you?

MAGGIE. It was so sudden—so unexpected—I didn't mean—I couldn't-——

DOUGLAS. He has gone—and he loved you;—yes, he loved you dearly, and I should have been so happy.

MAGGIE. I didn't mean him to go away; I never thought——

DOUGLAS. He would have shielded you, and been so true.

MAGGIE. (*Tearfully.*) Don't, please.

DOUGLAS. You have thrown away more than gold, Maggie—a man of truth and honor.

MAGGIE. (*Sobbing.*) Oh, father dear, don't—don't. If you only knew, you would——

DOUGLAS. (*Soothing her.*) There, there, I didn't mean it, Maggie; no, no, don't take it to heart so. It was cruel and selfish of me.

MAGGIE. No, no, it wasn't.

DOUGLAS. Yes, and I was wrong, and you were right, Maggie; if you didn't love him, you were right to tell him so.

MAGGIE. But I think—I—do—love him.

DOUGLAS. You loved him, and you let him go like that?

MAGGIE. Father, do you think he will come back?

DOUGLAS. Foolish little heart!

MAGGIE. Will he come back, dear?

DOUGLAS. Yes, yes; he loves you; he will come back.

MAGGIE. But when, father?

DOUGLAS. When? Ah, when? Too late for me to know, perhaps;—who can tell? No, he must come back now—now while I am here to know that you will be his wife. He must not wait—it may be too late. (*Going.*)

MAGGIE. Too late, father?

DOUGLAS. Yes—for me. He must come back now. We will bring him back.

MAGGIE. Where are you going? Not to him?

DOUGLAS. Hush! Let the old man manage it; Reuben loves you—he will understand me. It will be all right; don't stop me, Maggie;—leave it to the old man—leave it to the old man. [*Exit* DOUGLAS.

[*Enter* CARRIE MAXTON.]

CARRIE. (*Running to Maggie.*) Oh, Maggie, Maggie, such fun!

I've just seen Captain Beaumer, and—why, what is the matter, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Nothing, dear; only a little headache. What of Captain Beaumer?

CARRIE. Oh, such fun! I haven't finished laughing yet. Maggie, he must be dreadfully in love.

MAGGIE. With whom, Carrie?

CARRIE. Ah, I don't know, and I am dying to find out. When I saw him just now, he was standing under an old elm, rehearsing a declaration of love with all the fervor of a Don Juan.

MAGGIE. Captain Beaumer was?

CARRIE. Yes. Oh, I wish you could have seen him. It must have been such a terrible effort to him.

MAGGIE. Was he talking to himself?

CARRIE. No—that's the fun—to old Mrs. Smith's donkey. Think, Maggie, what fearful waste! All that amatory eloquence thrown away upon a beast of burden—and such a low species of the genus—and such an awfully attenuated specimen of the species as—Mrs. Smith's donkey.

MAGGIE. (*Laughing.*) Isn't it dreadful?

CARRIE. Dreadful? It's absolutely sinful. Think of the enormous tax on his powers of invention, and the strain on the cellular tissue of the brain before he could be induced to play Romeo to Mrs. S.'s donkey.

MAGGIE. Did he see you?

CARRIE. No. I stuffed my handkerchief into my mouth, and crept along the other side of the hedge. Oh, Maggie, if you could only have seen the blank expression on the donkey's face!

MAGGIE. It is a shame to make fun of him. He is very good natured.

CARRIE. I know he is: he is a dear old fellow, and I like him awfully. But he is so lazy: I always want to shake him.

MAGGIE. Hush! Look, Carrie—here he is—on the other side of the hedge. I am sure he heard you.

CARRIE. And I am sure he didn't. His thoughts are all centred on Mrs. Smith's donkey. Good-day, Captain Beaumer.

[CAPTAIN BEAUMER *enters at back of hedge.*]

BEAUMER. (*Looking over hedge.*) Aw—how-de-do? Aw—may I come over?

CARRIE. Come over? Why, of course—if you can. Are you going to jump?

BEAUMER. Jump? Good gwacious, no! Never jump

CARRIE. How are you going to get over then?

BEAUMER. Aw—don't know—cwawl thrwough.

CARRIE. Cwawl thrwough? Oh, what fun!—just like a rat—do begin—crawl away.

BEAUMER. Aw—don't look at me. (*Crawls through hedge.*)

CARRIE. Ha! ha! If only your club friends could see you, what fun it would be!

BEAUMER. Good gwacious—yaas—gweat fun. (*Seeing gap in hedge.*) Aw—I might have come thrwough that hole, eh?

CARRIE. Of course: that is what it is there for.

BEAUMER. Weally? Aw curwious arwangement—verwy pwimitive—all bwambles.

CARRIE. Why, you surely don't expect to find it made of bricks and mortar?

BEAUMER. Might be—aw—gweatly impwoved, eh?

MAGGIE. Oh, no, that would be desecration. In the country we look for nature—not improvement.

BEAUMER. Nature—aw—seems so doosid cwude and pwickly.

MAGGIE. That is the beauty of it. But I am afraid you have no soul for the beauties of nature. Why do you undergo such dreadful penance as to come into the country?

BEAUMER. Aw—I say—don't chaff.

CARRIE. You don't know what it is to be lost in ecstasy at the glory of the setting sun; or to be transported at the sight of some convivial bull in all the majesty of native freedom, with bowed head and bristling horns—the foam flakes flying from his lips—the thunder echoing from his hoofs—his eyes like globes of fire—intent on one engrossing thought—a nearer introduction to the society of man, and that man—you. Ugh!

BEAUMER. (*Starting.*) Good gwacious—don't!

CARRIE. To tread on toads—to have the friendly spider throw his web across your face, and follow it himself—to laugh with boyish glee when the nimble cricket takes a leap into your eye—or revel in the promenade of creeping things innumerable between your collar and your neck. Oh, do you ever revel thus?

BEAUMER. No: never wevel.

CARRIE. I don't believe there's a single thing in the country you admire.

BEAUMER. Weally—yaas—I assure you.

CARRIE. What is it then?

BEAUMER. (*To neither in particular.*) You.

MAGGIE. Who?

CARRIE. Which?

BEAUMER. (*To Maggie.*) You.

MAGGIE. Me?

CARRIE. Of course; everybody admires Maggie.

BEAUMER. Yaas—naturwally. Aw—would you—aw—have any verwy gweat wepugnance to—aw—marwying me, Miss Douglas?

CARRIE. Ahem!

BEAUMER. Aw—beg pardon—I—

CARRIE. Oh, I beg *your* pardon for being "de trop": but really, Captain Beaumer, you didn't give me the thinnest ghost of a hint that I wasn't wanted. Good-bye. (*Going.*)

MAGGIE. Don't go, please, Carrie. Captain Beaumer was only joking.

BEAUMER. No, good gwacious, don't go.

CARRIE. Oh, "good gwacious," I couldn't think of staying another minute. (*Imitating him.*) "Would you—aw—have any verwy gweat wepugnance to—aw"—Ha! ha! Good-bye.

[*Exit* CARRIE, *laughing.*

BEAUMER. She's gone.

MAGGIE. Do run after her, and fetch her back. Tell her you were only in fun.

BEAUMER. Aw—but I wasn't.

MAGGIE. You were not in fun.

BEAUMER. No: awfully serwious.

MAGGIE But this is ridiculous, Captain Beaumer. Supposing for a moment that you and I were to get married, how ever should we manage to live?

BEAUMER. Live, Miss Douglas?

MAGGIE. Captain Beaumer, have you ever known what it is to have a gigantic appetite that craves for chops and steaks, and at the same time a remorseless butcher with a gigantic bill against you, and a craving for pounds, shillings and pence?

BEAUMER. Good gwacious!—no.

MAGGIE. Have you ever thought what it is to sit over the last glimmer of fire, with the thermometer below zero, and beat your brains how to pay for the ton of coals the last pound of which has gone to make that glimmer?

BEAUMER. Good gwacious!—no; please don't.

MAGGIE. Have you ever known what it is to listen with fear and trembling to every knock at the door, and to give your servant the standing order to report you not at home?

BEAUMER. *(With alacrity.)* Good gwacious!—yaas!

MAGGIE. And what is your experience of the sensation?

BEAUMER. Horwible.

MAGGIE. And if this butcher in his greasy apron were to take his stand upon the door mat, and swear not to leave until his bill was paid? What would the result be, then?

BEAUMER. Horwible,—for the butcher.

MAGGIE. Don't you see how foolish it would be?

BEAUMER. For the butcher?

MAGGIE. No, for us.

BEAUMER. But we—aw—needn't have a butcher.

MAGGIE. Get along without the butcher?

BEAUMER. I think we might manage to get along verwy satisfac-orwily on sweet-bweads, oysters, cwoquettes—and things of that sort.

MAGGIE. But even these don't grow on bushes: and you have to pay for what you buy, don't you, Captain Beaumer?

BEAUMER. Verwy seldom.

MAGGIE. But you are expected to?

BEAUMER. Verwy fwequently.

MAGGIE. And when you tell them you can't pay, what do the trades-people do?

BEAUMER. Swear.

MAGGIE. But they must live.

BEAUMER. So must I.

MAGGIE. And isn't all this very annoying and uncomfortable?

BEAUMER. Verwy.

MAGGIE. And would'nt the bills be larger for two than for one?

BEAUMER. Pwobably. But if we loved one another——

MAGGIE. But I don't love you, Captain Beaumer.

BEAUMER. Weally? Aw—I suppose that *is* wather a dwawback, eh?

MAGGIE. Well, yes, I am afraid it is. Don't you think so?

BEAUMER. I don't see that it makes any great differwence. I love you, Miss Douglas, enough for both of us, so that it is pwecisely the same thing as if we each had a moderwate amount of love.

MAGGIE. That may be a very ingenious argument, but tradespeople won't take notes upon the bank of love. No, you must really try and get over it, Captain Beaumer; you have no idea how easy it is until you try. Here come Sir Harry Maxton and Mr. Marks: and as I don't want to meet them, I must say good bye. Don't think me unkind, Captain Beaumer: but you see how impossible it is.

[*Exit* MAGGIE.

BEAUMER. *(Alone.)* Aw—that's the weply I generwally get: I don't

think I shall ever get marwied. But, good gwacious, here comes Marks,—and Marks is always so outwageously gweedy for money. Which way can I wun? (*Looking round.*) Not acwoss the fields: he would spot me diwectly; but the ditches are so verwy wet! Ah!—this twee;—verwy undignified, but verwy necessarwy:—its wisky too, for Marks generwally finds me up a twee. But there's nothing else; so I must twy it. *(Climbs up into tree and hides.)*

[*Enter* Sir Harry Maxton *and* Marks]

Sir H. Mr. Marks, I fail to follow exactly this most estimable plan of yours.

Marks. The thing lies in a nutshell, Sir Harry, and is as simple as divorce. Let me put it again shortly. Unfortunately—perhaps more so for me than for you,—you are in my debt to a considerable amount, with no visible prospect of paying it unless I foreclose on the estate. The law of self preservation will force me to resort to this.

Sir H. I am in your power, Marks

Marks. Exactly,—yes,—thank you,—that is what I would imply. Now this little scheme of mine will enable you to pay off the debt, and possibly a bonus over in recognition of my suggestion, and put your estate upon its legs again intact.

Sir H. But how will it benefit me to marry Miss Douglas? Beyond her paint and brushes, she hasn't a shilling in the world.

Marks. Hasn't she? Perhaps not: but, if you fall in with me in this, she shall have,—and a good many of 'em too. Listen. Douglas, the artist, had a brother—a bachelor to all accounts—with whom he quarreled years ago, and whom he has not seen or heard of for twenty years,—a close-fisted fellow, and as selfish as an oyster. This brother has just died worth a hundred thousand pounds.

Sir H. Has he left any to the artist?

Marks. Not he. Like many a miser, he loved his gold so well that he could not bear the thought of giving it to any one: so he died without making any will.

Sir H. Then Miss Douglas' father is his only heir, entitled to the whole amount?

Marks. Provided that no marriage can be proved, with lawful issue.

Sir H. And there is no evidence of that? You said he was a bachelor.

Marks. "To all accounts" I said he was. And if you agree with me, to all accounts he shall remain a bachelor.

Sir H. Why, what have you and I to do with it?

MARKS. This. In looking through his papers, I found this letter dated from Australia four years ago. Cast your eye over it and tell me what you think of it. (*Hands him letter.*)

SIR H. (*reading*) "To Herrick Douglas, Esq. My dear father. "The barrier you have raised between us shall never be broken down "by me until you say the word. Here in a new world where your "cruelty has driven me 'may God in his own good time soften your "heart and bring us together again' is the constant prayer of your "affectionate Son, Herrick Douglas. Queensland, Australia." —This son then is the legal heir to all these thousands.

MARKS. Precisely. But suppose he never claims the money.

SIR H. Of course he will, as soon as he hears of his father's death.

MARKS. Suppose he never hears of it.

SIR H. What do you mean? It is part of your duty to inform him, isn't it?

MARKS. A man's first duty, Sir Harry, is to his own family: when he has fed them, he can open the window and throw a few crumbs to the sparrows. The son has evidently quarreled with his father, and been turned adrift, and they have had no correspondence for the last four years. He may be dead: let us hope so, as it simplifies the case.

SIR H. Then you propose to let the artist have the money, and for me to marry the artist's daughter?

MARKS. Exactly. The artist dies: the money comes to his daughter: what is the daughter's is yours, and what is yours is mine, —or a part of it anyway. What do you think of it?

BEAUMER. (*In tree.*) Good gwacious!

SIR H. Well, Marks, if you ask me candidly what I think of it, of course I think it is an infernal swindle, and that a man would be a scoundrel who had anything to do with it.

MARKS. Ah! Well, that's a trifle too candid: I didn't mean you to be quite so candid as that. You honour me with the management of your affairs, Sir Harry, and I submit this in confidence, as a plan for relieving your estate.

SIR H. I'll have nothing to do with it. I am no criminal.

MARKS. No chance of being found out, Sir Harry. Suppose the son should turn up, what then? There's no evidence to show we ever dreamed of his existence. Our hands are clean, and we deserve only sympathy.

SIR H. You think a man is criminal only when his crime has been discovered?

MARKS. Certainly, Sir Harry. The whole of society knows that,

and practices it. You'll accept my plan, Sir Harry?

SIR H. No: I can't do a dirty thing like that. Say no more about it.

MARKS. That's a great pity. I'm very sorry, Sir Harry, but I shall be compelled to serve a notice of foreclosure. I must look out for myself. Be just before you're generous.

SIR H. Just?

MARKS. To myself, Sir Harry,—to myself.

SIR H. Ah! Can't you wait a bit?

MARKS. Waited too long already, Sir Harry. Times are hard. Well, as you won't be persuaded, I may as well write to Australia and bring the wanderer home. Perhaps it will pay me best in the end. Good morning, Sir Harry. (*Going.*)

SIR H. Stay. Don't be in such a hurry, Marks.

MARKS. Mail goes out to-night. All business promptly attended to: my professional reputation depends upon punctuality and dispatch.

SIR H. Won't you give me a little longer, Marks?

MARKS. Not without the prospect of a rich marriage, Sir Harry.

SIR H. Marks, I am in the power of the biggest scoundrel that ever put pen to parchment.

MARKS. Hope not, Sir Harrry: only try to oblige, I'm sure.

SIR H. Marks, I'll agree with you to keep this marriage secret. But I don't believe I shall ever look an honest man in the face again.

MARKS. Dear me, Sir Harry, that's nothing. I have looked the most honest men in London in the face, and never turned a hair.

SIR H. You've had a longer experience than I.

MARKS. Ha! ha! Well, here's the awkward letter, Sir Harry: will you keep it?

SIR H. (*Tearing it up and throwing pieces on the ground.*) Let it go to the winds, and my honor with it.

MARKS. Ha! ha! You remind me so of your father, Sir Harry.

SIR H. Don't speak of him, man. He would have died sooner than do a dirty piece of work like this.

MARKS. He was a very obstinate man, Sir Harry, very obstinate. Now to lay siege to the Douglas, and from to-day we'll date a revolution in the fortunes of your estate. Come, I must give Mr. Douglas notice of *his* change of fortunes: in the meantime light this cigar, and let us discuss the "modus operandi."

[*Exeunt* SIR HARRY *and* MARKS.

BEAUMER. (*Looking out from the branches of the tree.*) Aw—this is a verwy horwible situation: doosid cwamped and disagweeable too.

This twee is terwibly irwegular—more so than any other twee I was ever up. I wonder if it would be safe to come down. (*Looking round.*) There doesn't seem to be any one wound now. I think I will venture. Good gwacious! There's something bwoken. (*Comes down.*) That's a gweat welief. How dweadful it would be to be a bird, and live in a twee. But good gwacious, this is a verwy serwious thing—a wegular conspirwacy—and I'm an accessorwy conspiwator, or something cwiminal like that. I am weally verwy annoyed. I wonder what I ought to do as a temporwarwy wesident in this distwict. If I keep this secwet, Miss Douglas will be an heirwess, and the butcher's bill will be paid wegularly. If I weveal it to the authorwities, Marks will be impwisoned, the Austwalian will have the money, and the wemorseless butcher will wemain stationarwy on the door mat. It's a gweat we ponsibility, and wequires time. I will collect the fwagments of the letter, and temporwize. (*Hesitating.*) I—aw—weally don't like to touch such things: if I could find——

[*Enter* JERRY, *the haymaker.*]

aw—here comes a wustic to the wescue. Aw—come heah, wustic.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! That beant my name, measter: oi be called Jerry, and feather—he be called Jeremiah. He! he!

BEAUMER. Aw—beg pardon. Ve wy old family—the Jerwemiahs.

JERRY. Well, feather—he be most nigh noinety.

BEAUMER. Weally? Aw—verwy satisfactorwy.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! That be so, sure-ly: feather, he be most nigh dead. He! he!

BEAUMER. Aw—have a cigar, Jerwemiah?

JERRY. What be that there?

BEAUMER. Cigar—Ha ana—flor fina—smoke.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! He! he!

BEAUMER. I pwesume you do not indulge in the narcotic weed, Jerwemiah?

JERRY. Oi makes a pint o' stickin' to a poipe mostly, or mebbe a chaw o' bacca.

BEAUMER. Aw,—beg pardon,—a what?

JERRY. Chaw.

BEAUMER. Aw! (*Aside.*) Aw—Jerwemiah is not intellectual. (*Aloud.*) Aw—would you like to earn some money, Jerwemiah?

JERRY. Well, measter, mebbe oi would.

BEAUMER. You would? Thank you, yes. What would be the most moderwate charge you would make for picking up those pieces of paper, Jerwemiah?

JERRY. (*Grinning.*) How much for pickin' up they bits o' paper?

BEAUMER. Would half a cwown be enough?

JERRY. Half a crown for pickin' up they bits o' paper? You be makin' fun of oi? He! he!

BEAUMER. Not at all, Jerwemiah: pick them up, and here's the money.

JERRY. (*Picking up pieces.*) Well, oi'm busted if ever oi seed the loike o' this. Half a crown for pickin' up they bits o' paper! Sure'y you do make me larf: some o' you gentle folk be mighty handsome wi' yer money. There ye be, muster: that be all.

BEAUMER. I am verwy much obliged to you, Jerwemiah. Here's the money.

JERRY. Much obliged to *you*, muster. (*Touching his hat.*) Mornin', sir. Haw! haw! haw! Half a crown for pickin' up they bits o' paper. Well, oi'm busted! He! he! [*Exit* JERRY.

BEAUMER. Busted! Aw—that's—aw—a verwy vulgar wemark, but as Jerwemiah is in weceipt of my last half cwown, it is verwy appwopwiate. But I have the cwime, I will put it in my secwet pocket, so that no one can depwive me of it. I must wetire, and wesolve what to do. Next time I want a little bill arwanged, Marks must weally be more weasonable. It is verwy serwious—verwy.

[*Exit* BEAUMER.

[*Enter old* DOUGLAS, *followed by* MARKS.]

MARKS. Stay, sir: a few moment's conversation may be profitable to both of us. Legal conversation always is profitable—for one of the parties.

DOUGLAS. The pecuniary profit will be small to either of us, I am afraid, Mr. Marks. My power of rewarding legal knowledge is as visionary as any benefit the law will bring to me.

MARKS. Visionary? Visionary is good. Vision is the faculty of seeing. In your profession and mine, Mr. Douglas, it is the faculty of seeing what to less favored people is vague and illusory. To catch this vague and illusory thing—to grasp it, and render it permanent for the use and enjoyment of our fellow creatures, you employ paint and canvas,—I, ink and parchment.

DOUGLAS. At another time, Mr. Marks, a disquisition on our respective professions may be agreeable. At present I am busy, and have something else to think of.

MARKS. Ah, but let your thoughts take the highest flight that the most fanciful imagination can suggest, they shall be but as a pea upon the surface of the globe compared with the tangible reality that you

shall grasp, if you but grant me five minutes conversation. You had a brother, Mr. Douglas——

DOUGLAS. Really, Mr. Marks, what can——

[*Enter* MAGGIE.]

MARKS. Ah! Here is Miss Douglas,—charming,—delighted to meet you. You come most opportunely. Miss Douglas, you had an uncle; and you, sir, I repeat—a brother. (*Douglas makes a motion of impatience.*) Don't interrupt. For many years I have been the legal adviser of Mr. Herrick Douglas, who I am sorry to say seems to have neglected his double duty as avuncular brother.

MAGGIE. What is all this, father?

DOUGLAS. I must decline to discuss a topic of purely family interest with a comparative stranger, Mr. Marks.

MARKS. Hope to better acquainted soon, Mr. Douglas. To be brief then, it is my painful duty to inform you that your in many-ways estimable, but close fisted brother, was served with notice to quit, and vacated his chambers suddenly yesterday morning.

DOUGLAS. This language, Mr. Marks, is——

MARKS. —involved in legal phrascology,—so it is,—pardon me a thousand times. To speak plainly, he has passed away.

DOUGLAS. Do you mean that he is dead?

MARKS. Dead? yes—exactly—that is, what in common and unprofessional parlance is known as dead, in as much as he has ceased to breathe, and in as much as the total deprivation of breath and suspension of activity in the bronchial tubes conduce to permanent inaction of the pulse of life In this sense your brother is dead—as Australian beef. In another sense, according to the views taken by legal luminaries in almost every country from the earliest times, he still lives: for the law—which is stronger than death—allows no man to die: He lives again in his representatives.

[HARLEIGH *enters at back.*]

DOUGLAS. Poor Herrick! Has he left Maggie—my daughter—any small remembrance?

MARKS. Not a ducat, sir. He was consistent to the last. He left no will at all. You, as his nearest relative, are sole heir to all he left, —some hundred thousand pounds.

MAGGIE. Oh, father!

DOUGLAS. I, heir to all this money? And Maggie?

MARKS. —Heiress to all your money. Let me congratulate you, Mr. Douglas.

DOUGLAS. Is—is—this—true?

MARKS. True? Who doubts the law? It is infallible. It is as true as it is that the Bulstead Bank suspended payment this morning and that the shareholders will have to make good every farthing of the deficit. Nothing is certain but the law.

HARLEIGH. (*Coming forward.*) What is it you say? The Bulstead Bank has failed? Is that true?

MARKS. Certainly: are you interested?

HARLEIGH. All I have in the world is invested in Bulstead Bank shares.

MARKS. All you have in the world, and the liability is unlimited? Then, my dear sir, you must know that you are——

HARLEIGH. —a ruined man; that is all.

MARKS. All? Quite enough too. Dear me, dear me!

MAGGIE. (*To Douglas.*) Father, do you hear this? He is ruined. Have you spoken to him?

DOUGLAS. Not yet, Maggie: I haven't had a chance; but I will now.

(*The sun goes down at the back, and the clouds are tinged with color. Haymakers enter, laughing and singing, after the day's work.* SIR HARRY, CARRIE *and* BEAUMER *enter casually.*)

HARLEIGH. (*To haymakers.*) Stay, lads: wait here a bit before you go home to-night. I've something to say to you. (*He stands under the old tree; they gather round.*) You and I, lads, have been together many years, and some of you can remember my father before I knew him myself. I've always tried to do my duty by you as he did. Have I done it, lads?

ALL. Yes, yes, Muster Harleigh.

HARLEIGH. If things have seemed a bit hard sometimes, I want you to forget it all now, and think I meant it all for the best. Something has happened, lads,—something bad:—not dishonorable,—no one can say that ever, but—but—I am going to leave you, lads. The old land and farm, where I was born,—that must seem almost like home to you all,—will pass into other hands, and the name of Harleigh be forgotten. I am in trouble, lads, and everything must go to keep the old name bright and clear to the last.

JIM. Ye beant a goin' for long, Muster Harleigh?

HARLEIGH. I can not tell,—perhaps for ever. I must begin my life again. I am going to America,—I am going to work; but I don't want to go alone, lads. Who of you will come with me?—not as a ser-

vant, but as a friend—share and share alike. (*He pauses*; *no answer.*) I'd like to have one old face from the old home to look on when the sea is rolling between me and the little farm. (*No answer.*) Won't any of you come? (*Pause.*)

MAGGIE. (*Running to him.*) Reuben—Reuben—you shall not go; I was cruel just now, but I did not mean it:—forgive me.

HARLEIGH. God bless you, Maggie. It is like your kind, gentle heart to pity me. Thank you—thank you.

MAGGIE. But Reuben—it is not pity. I didn't mean it. I love you.

HARLEIGH. Ah! Love me? Maggie, do you mean that? (*She rushes into his arms.*) Yes, you do. Then it shall not be "good-bye" for ever. I will come back—I will come back.

MAGGIE. Oh, but don't go—please don't;—we are rich now: there is enough for all;—don't go, Reuben.

HARLEIGH. Rich? Aye, and I am a beggar. No, I must go. I would not marry you like that, Maggie. Don't ask me. My fortunes are like that sinking sun.

MAGGIE. The same sun that sets to-night will rise again to-morrow, Reuben.

HARLEIGH. Aye, but before it rise again, there must be hours of darkness. So must it be with me. It goes to visit other lands, and so must I. But as that crimson sky is herald of a fair to-morrow, so shall your love be harbinger of brighter days to come. Help me to be a man. (*Appealing again to the men.*) Who will come with me? (*No answer.*) Not one!

[*Enter old* MATTHEW.]

MAT. Muster Reuben, Muster Reuben, what be this? You beant a-goin' to leave t' old pleace—you beant a-goin' to leave us? It beant true, be it, sir?

HARLEIGH. Yes, Matthew, it is true enough.

MAT. Doant 'ee do that, sir—doant 'ee—please.

HARLEIGH. I must begin work again. Don't grieve, old friend—you've been more friend than servant—don't grieve for it. (*To men.*) Isn't there one of you lads who talked so loud of going to America just now, that will take my hand and come with me?

MAT. Doant 'ee go, Muster Reuben—doant 'ee. It beant nateral.

HARLEIGH. I must, old friend—I must.

MAT. Must ye? (*To the men.*) And none on ye won't go wi' him? Shame on ye, lads, shame on ye! I be nought but a broken down old body—most nigh wore out—but it shan't be said that the young measter couldn't find a man of all they what had eaten his bread, to stand by

him in his trouble. Take me, sir; take me with 'ee. I'll die for 'ee, same loike as I've lived. Dang 'un!

HARLEIGH. (*Affected.*) Thank you, Matthew, thank you!—God bless you, but it can not be.

MAT. (*Excitedly.*) Dang 'un, but I say it *shall* be. May be I've got some money of my own, and may be I'll use it to see they furren parts too.

BEAUMER. Bwavo—Matthew—Bwavo! Here's half a cwown—(*feeling in his pockets; suddenly recollecting.*) Good gwacious! Jerwemiah!

MAT. Doan't 'ee say "no," sir, doan't 'ee. I beant so old as I look, not by a score o' year;—and I'm most nigh tired o' livin' where there beant no chance for a man to better himself. Say ye'll take me, sir, —do 'ee now. (*Breaking down.*) Oh, Muster Reuben, I could'nt abear to stay in t' old place, and know as you was gone, and would'nt come back no more. I couldn't abear that—I couldn't abear it.

HARLEIGH. (*Grasping his hand.*) Good noble old man—you *shall* go with me—and we'll come back again to the old place. Yes, Maggie darling, don't cry: I'll make a fortune in a new land, and I'll come back;—trust me, I will come back. I am going with a brave heart now, knowing that you are waiting and looking for me again. It shan't be long; be true to me, Maggie darling, and though thousands of miles of land and water lie between us, we shall not be separated. Be brave and wait. Jack, old friend, come with me—you must be my attorney while I am gone. God bless you, Mr. Douglas, and thanks, Sir Harry, good bye." Meet me at the farm, Matthew, and—and—Maggie, I'll come back—and good bye all—and God bless you all.

(*The church clock strikes six; the sun sets;* HARLEIGH *and* MATTHEW *pass through gap in hedge, and stand on other side, as the rest form tableau, waving, &c.*)

(CURTAIN.)

An interval of three years and a half between First and Second Acts.

ACT II.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

SCENE.—*An old panelled library at* SIR HARRY MAXTON'S, *hung with family portraits. French windows at back, with heavy curtains drawn. Blazing fire. Time, Christmas Eve, three years and a half after Act I.*

[SIR HARRY MAXTON *and* MARKS *discovered.*]

MARKS. You see it's time something more definite was settled, Sir Harry. It is three years now, and more, since we entered into a certain little agreement, and destroyed a certain little letter, for our mutual benefit.

SIR H. (*Impatiently.*) Yes, yes, I know.

MARKS. "Mutual," Sir Harry, is a good word—a fat, comfortable, well-favoured word—a word of liquid labials, such as poets love. But poetry is not business, Sir Harry, and thus far the benefit—from a strictly business point of view—cannot be said to be exactly mutual. You are the only one who has derived any advantage from it, in as much as I have temporarily waived my claims against you.

SIR H. I've heard all this a dozen times before.

MARKS. Yes, Sir Harry, you hear; but you don't act.

SIR H. I tell you, Marks, I haven't the heart to carry the matter any further.

MARKS. You can't say I've been unreasonable, Sir Harry. Opportunity has not been wanting. Time, with that unpleasantly sharp scythe of his, has mown off the heads of three whole years, and is getting his hand well in with the fourth. Still, we have not quaffed the ambrosial nectar of golden affluence—we have not attained to the Nirvana of our aspirations.

SIR H. (*Impatiently.*) All right—don't bother—I know.

MARKS. Yes, that's all very well, Sir Harry, but it's "all wrong—nothing *but* bother, and no knowing anything." Why, if I were of your age, with your personal appearance and standing in the county, I could have proposed and been accepted enough times to have started a select Mormon colony of my own. Come, Sir Harry, wake up, think of all I have done for you, and say if I don't deserve some little consideration.

SIR H. (*Losing his temper.*) Think of what you have done for me? *You* have the insolence to jog my memory? Do you think it such a jaded, callous brute that it can feel no sting without the spur from you? Curse you! I do think of it—I am always thinking of it. It sets my brain on fire—it drives me mad. What have you done for me, that you can boast of it, and dare to let it urge a claim for my consideration?—made me a scoundrel, and induced me to pawn the family honour, as you before induced me to pawn the family estates—with as little hope of redemption for the one as for the other. (*Bitterly.*) Oh, no, I don't forget my obligations.

MARKS. Mere words, Sir Harry—mere words: offspring born of a highly nervous state of mental activity, and extremely unhealthy when examined under the microscope of rational enquiry. Why, the family honour of the Maxtons is my honour, Sir Harry, and as free from the burden of hypothecation as the Koh-i-noor. Reflect, my dear sir, there's not a rag of suspicion on either of us.

SIR H. (*Starting up.*) Marks, if you speak to me again like that, you'll make me desperate. I am sick and tired to death of all your specious arguments and phrases about the fraud not being suspected. Do you think, man, because I have been forced to eat the garbage of the gutter, that I have lost the sense of taste and smell? By all that's rational, let us cal things by their proper names when we're alone. You're a scoundrel, and I'm another: and the proper place for us is in a convict's cell.

MARKS. Hush! Sir Harry, hush! Hard names—more unhealthy offspring—keep them in the nursery, Sir Harry: they're too noisy: ungrateful too, after all the money I've advanced at different times.

SIR H. A few paltry thousands on good security, doubled and trebled now by bonuses and interest, until the whole estate is eaten up by mortgages, to make a lining for the pockets of your honorable self. Is it for this that I am to pick my words lest I offend your delicate sense of justice? Is it for this that you would claim my gratitude? Not unless gratitude and curses are synonymous.

MARKS. (*In a wounded tone.*) Dear me—dear me! To think I should have it thrown back in my face, when I was acting only for the good of the estate! I put in your power to pay off every claim,—my own included—and make the property as sound and unencumbered as any in the county: and you grudge me the payment of a mere commission:—on my honour, Sir Harry—a mere commission.

SIR H. Pshaw! man. Do you think that I don't know you well, and know well what I owe you too? You have been an evil influence in my

path ever since I was a fool of a boy—not yet of age—and you came to me with offers of assistance. I was weak then: I did't know you, and I wanted help. I was weaker still three years ago: I did know you then, and yet I listened to your villainous schemes. Marks, I can not ask Miss Douglas to be my wife.

MARKS. (*Starting.*) Can not? Nonsense, my dear sir; why not?

SIR H. Or, if you like it better, I *will* not.

MARKS. Chut! chut! That fertile train of yours again, Sir Harry! A mere passing antipathy to the lady—a—

SIR H. That'll do; we've had enough of this.

MARKS. I never supposed you were in love: but, shall, in time—

SIR H. Hold your tongue, man, if you can; you drive me almost wild. With all your foresight, there's one thing you've overlooked.

MARKS. Ha! what is that?

SIR H. The possibility that I might come to love Miss Douglas, not for her money bags, but for herself.

MARKS. Well, what of that? That makes the arrangement all the more satisfactory.

SIR H. Does it? It is because I do love her, that I refuse to let her link her life to mine.

MARKS. Whew!

SIR H. You don't understand?

MARKS. Love her, and yet refuse to marry her? Why the man's mad.

SIR H. I refuse to ask her to be my wife, because I will not so degrade her as to let her pass her life with one as vile and worthless as I am. Yes, you may sneer. I never for a moment hoped that you would understand me. *(Firmly.)* But mark this well;—I will defend her from marrying what I know myself to be—what you have made me—a scoundrel.

MARKS. This is absolutely rediculous, Sir Harry.

SIR H. To you it may be—not to me.

MARKS. It is very acme of quixotism.

SIR H. (*Quietly.*) I think not.

MARKS. But I don't grasp your motive.

SIR H. No;—you would'nt.

MARKS. What do you expect to gain by it?

SIR H. Nothing.

MARKS. Nothing? But this is actual robbery to me, Sir Harry.

SIR H. Bah!

MARKS. Bah? But its not "bah!"—its anything but "bah!". I

tell you the match *must* come off.

SIR H. (*Quietly.*) It will not come off.

MARKS. (*Blustering.*) I say it shall. Damme, sir, I've money in it. I protest: I'll not allow such folly: it's wicked—absolutely wicked, and flying in the face of Providence. I *insist* in the affair being carried through.

SIR H. Insist? You forget, man, you're not speaking to your valet.

MARKS. I can't help it: you drive me to it. It is nothing less than suicide—financial suicide. There is Miss Douglas waiting—I've got eyes, and I can see it—absolutely waiting to say at once that she is willing to become Lady Maxton: and you won't even give her a chance.

SIR H. And why is she willing? To please her father—because she sees he wishes it, and puts his happiness before her own. The old man loves her as the apple of his eye, and the thought of leaving her to fall a prey to some adventurer, as bankrupt in heart as in estate, is to him a daily and hourly agony. He trusts me, he believes in my honour as in his own. To marry her—knowing what I do—and to deceive still further this old man who has so short a time to live, is like swearing a perjured oath upon the tombstone of a saint. I'll have no more to do with it.

MARKS. Ah! All this sounds very fine, Sir Harry—but it don't pay. Besides, what if Miss Douglas should return your love?

SIR H. What? Love? She—Maggie Douglas have love for me? No, no. Wherever Reuben Harleigh is, there is Maggie Douglas' heart.

MARKS. Faugh! Reuben Harleigh again—always Reuben Harleigh! A clod like that! What is he to her?

SIR H. Everything. Have you forgotten that scene, three summers ago, under the old tree in the hay-field on Reuben Harleigh's farm? She never has.

MARKS. Three summers ago! Do you suppose three summers of wealth and comfort have not blotted out the memory of a fustian coat? Where is your philosophy and knowledge of the world? Besides, how often have I told you that the man is dead—killed in a bar-room quarrel in America? A live baronet is better than a dead beggar.

SIR H. Whose word have we for that but yours?

MARKS. I know he is dead, Sir Harry. On the honour of a gentleman I ——

SIR H. Yes, yes: that'll do, man: none of that to me: remember what I said.

MARKS. Well, well, do as you please. You're an obstinate man, Sir Harry, and an obstinate man must take the consequences of his ob-

stinacy. Don't blame me—I've done my best. But if things don't assume immediately a better feeling, I shall certainly foreclose on the estate:—these pictures must be valuable—that one of Sir Gregory by Vandyck, for instance: it would be a pity to scatter the family group, eh, Sir Harry? Let me see: I will give you just one week to come to your senses in. This is Christmas Eve: on New Year's Eve I shall expect your answer. This is my ultimatum: so you had better think well of it, and make your own bed to lie on. [*Exit* MARKS.

SIR H. (*Alone.*) I *have* made my bed—a bed of flints and brambles, that goad and cut me to the very soul each way I turn. Oh, God! I would gladly change places with the poorest labourer in the land, to feel as I once did, before I met this man. Fool! Coward that I was, ever to listen to him—to become a partner in his fraud, and sink to such a depth of infamy that I—bearing my father's honoured name—must see my will subservient to the threats of such a moral hound as this. What can I do? Have I gone so far that there must be no turning back? Have I gone so far that I must add this piece of villainy to the rest, and marry Maggie Douglas? Each way I turn, disgrace or ruin stares me in the face. If I defy this man, and refuse to do his will, these lands that have been ours for generations—this dear old home—these very pictures of my ancestors—all that I have been taught from boyhood to revere as relics of an honourable past—become the property of this spawn of ink and parchmennt. This room, where gentlemen have sat as magistrates and rendered justice with impartial voice, will be the den of a successful villain, who will chuckle as he thinks of roguery seated in the judge's chair. These halls, that have echoed to the tramp of men in boot and spur—paths that have known my mother's gentle step, and noted how it grew more feeble, day by day, before she died—will answer, with a choked and muffled tongue, the cat-like tread of—Marks. And I—I, the guardian of these memories—I who should hand them down untarnished to the future—I turn traitor, and deliver up the keys that let the enemy in. No, never! By these same portraits I swear it—never!! It need not be. There is another way. If I degrade myself still lower, and stoop to act another lie before an old man and his daughter: and make a girl my wife, into whose eyes I cannot look without a blush of shame, I have the power of making the estate as free and unencumbered as——Ah! that is worse—ten thousand times;—I cannot—will not stoop to that. Oh! that I had some honest friend to give advice and help.

(*Sits at table, and buries his face in his hands.*)

[*Enter old* DOUGLAS *and* MAGGIE. DOUGLAS *looks much older than in Act I., and is very feeble and broken in mind and body. He leans on* MAGGIE.]

DOUGLAS. Thanks, Maggie—thanks. What a miserable, helpless old body I am getting now. No use to any one now—no use to any one. (*Sits in arm chair.*)

MAGGIE. Hush, dear; here is Sir Harry. Don't you see him?

DOUGLAS. Sir Harry, eh? Ah, yes, so it is—so it is. My sight is not as good as it was, Sir Harry—a little dim. Not much use, Sir Harry—not much use.

SIR H. Don't say that, sir. What would Miss Douglas do without her father to look after?

DOUGLAS. Ah, yes—Maggie—Maggie's everything. Where is she? Ah, God bless her! Let me see, what was it ——? Oh, ah, I remember. Run away, Madge, and leave me here a bit. I want to speak to Sir Harry—alone.

MAGGIE. Don't tire yourself, dear. Don't let him talk too much, please, Sir Harry.

[*Exit* MAGGIE.

SIR H. I think you are looking better to-day, Mr. Douglas. When the cold weather has gone, I hope we shall see you about again.

DOUGLAS. Thanks, Sir Harry—thanks: we'll hope so: but I'm almost past being helped now by either heat or cold:—an old man, Sir Harry—feeble—very feeble.

SIR H. Miss Douglas cares for you so well that ——

DOUGLAS. Poor Maggie—poor Madge! (*Looking around anxiously.*) Ah, where is she? Where has she gone?

SIR H. You just asked her to leave the room, Mr. Douglas.

DOUGLAS. I? No, no,—eh? Ah, yes, I remember now. It is about her I want to speak, Sir Harry.

SIR H. About Miss Douglas?

DOUGLAS. Yes, yes, about Maggie. I can't rest until I have spoken.

SIR H. (*Aside.*) What can this mean?

DOUGLAS. I don't sleep well, now. I lie awake, or else I dream—dream all night.

SIR H. I am sorry for that, Mr. Douglas. Is your room not comfortable? Will you ——?

DOUGLAS. No, no, it's not that. (*In a whisper.*) I dream of *her*.

SIR H. Of Miss Douglas?

DOUGLAS. Yes—of Maggie—that they come to take her from me—

to drag her down—to treat her as they treated me, beeause she is my child.

SIR H. (*Aside.*) What can be coming? (*Aloud.*) Is there no remedy—no help?

DOUGLAS. Help? Yes—I dream of help too: and it comes—just when my arms relax, and I cannot hold her longer. It comes, and then I can sleep—not till then.

SIR H. But what is the cause of these horrible dreams?

DOUGLAS. (*In an excited manner.*) Dread, Sir Harry—dread. For years I was haunted by the sight of Maggie, after my death, in poverty and misery, battling alone against the world, as I had done: I saw her in rags, with hunger written on her cheek: I saw her shivering with the icy cold, driven shelterless from door to door, and treated as the world treats those who cannot help themselves: I saw her shudder at the insult of the libertine: I heard her cry to Heaven to save her from the cruelty of man. And last of all, I saw her standing on a bridge at midnight, with the river flowing darkly underneath, while all around a mighty city slept. I saw her raise her hands to Heaven, and then—then—Ah! God!—no more—no more. (*Hides his eyes.*)

SIR H. (*Aside.*) This is horrible.

DOUGLAS. That is all gone. Those phantoms fled at the sight of wealth—sudden wealth—more than I ever hoped for—more—much more than I ever wanted. Then came the vision of fresh danger—not poverty, not misery now—but the vision of my child, still alone, surrounded by adventurers, who fawned and smiled on her, seeking to win her love, while their itching fingers clutched her gold. Night after night have I been haunted by these hideous dreams. I have seen myself lying stiff and cold in my coffin, with the grave clothes wound about me; I have heard them make their plans, and whisper of the old man's money and the ways of spending it, when they had won the old man's daughter. I have struggled like a madman to break the bonds that held me, and take her safe in my old arms again. Dreams—dreams—only dreams: how long will they be only dreams? (*Falls back exhausted in chair.*)

SIR H. (*Aside.*) How near the truth he comes. (*Aloud.*) But you spoke of help that always came.

DOUGLAS. Help? Yes, in my dreams. But I must see it with my waking eyes, must know that it is here—here—now, before the grave has closed on me, and left her all alone. (*Suddenly.*) Oh, Sir Harry, understand me—pardon me—forgive me; the time is so short now—but my old eyes are not too dim to see that you love Maggie.

SIR H. I? Oh, sir.

DOUGLAS. (*Eagerly*). Tell me, is it not so?

SIR H. (*Hesitating.*) Indeed—Mr. Douglas—I—

DOUGLAS. Ah! You do love her, Sir Harry, eh?

SIR H. Mr. Douglas, I do indeed.

DOUGLAS. Ah! I knew it—I was sure of it. Love for my child has given me the eyes of youth again. I have watched you, and noted every word and look—almost with fear and trembling, yet praying that this might be the answer to my prayers.

SIR H. I am not worthy of this regard; I——

DOUGLAS. How I have prayed that I might live to take the hand of one who should be worthy of her love.

SIR H. Oh! Hush! Hush!

DOUGLAS You are an honourable, upright man, as those who bear your name have always been. What should you know of scheming heartlessness? The word of honour of a Maxton, like a river in its course from spring to sea, has gathered strength in every generation, until it stands out now as pure and unimpeachable as a child's first word.

SIR H. (*In desperation.*) Oh, sir, say no more, I implore you. You do not know all. I am not what you think me.

DOUGLAS. Not what I think you?

SIR H. No. My—my estate is deeply involved: I have been reckless: I—I am not worthy to ask Miss Douglas to be my wife.

DOUGLAS. Your heart is good: the rest will come in time. Money in my eyes is but of little value now. I look only for an honourable man who will love Maggie, and guard her as I have done.

SIR H. Would you come to me, and with your own hands voluntarily place your daughter in my protection?

DOUGLAS. (*Eagerly.*) I would, Sir Harry—I would.

SIR H. (*Wonderingly.*) Can you trust me like this?

DOUGLAS. Yes, for I believe that I can read mankind. The blood of youth is hot, and the head of youth is light, but honour is a thing as dear to youth as age. See, Sir Harry, I not only wish it: I beg you, if you love my child, ask her to be your wife.

SIR H. I cannot—I dare not.

DOUGLAS. Dare not?

SIR H. To do so would be to betray the trust you place in me. For God's sake do not press me farther. You make me hate myself.

DOUGLAS. I am sure there can be nothing very wrong. By one who thinks as you do the past can soon be mended.

SIR H. But I have many things to tell you first—things hard to say.

DOUGLAS. Then let them wait. All I care to know is, would you be good to Maggie all your life?

SIR H. To the last moment of it.

DOUGLAS. Then speak to her—speak to her now—to-night. Do not keep me in suspense. She shall have all the money, Sir Harry, and we will redeem the mortgages on your estate. Will you promise me? See—see, an old man kneels to you. (*On his knees.*)

SIR H. (*Horrified.*) No, no! God, no! Not to me—not to me. (*Lifts him up. After a pause.*) She—she does not love me.

DOUGLAS. Ah, who can tell: but oh, I hope so. I have not spoken to her. Tell her I hope—hope it may be so.

SIR H. And Reuben Harleigh? She has not forgotten him. Does not all her love lie buried with him?

DOUGLAS. Ah! Poor lad, poor Reuben! He loved her well. It was sad—very sad. But he is dead—dead; and that is past. Who can tell what time may work? This is the last Christmas I may ever see. Let me lie down to-night with the knowledge that my child will be safe with you. Give me your promise.

SIR H. (*Aside.*) What can I say? (*After a pause, aloud.*) I promise.

DOUGLAS. Ah! God bless you! An old man's blessing on you! The help has come at last! Thank God—thank God! (*Bursts into tears.*)

SIR H. Hush! Let me take you to your room. You need rest and sleep badly.

DOUGLAS. Rest? Yes, I shall rest soon now in the sleep that knows no dreaming. Come, Sir Harry, I can meet it now in peace. Come.

[*Exeunt*, DOUGLAS *leaning on* SIR HARRY.

[*Enter* CARRIE MAXTON, *followed by* BEAUMER *carrying a large kitchen spoon, and a bottle of brandy.*]

BEAUMER. Aw—I say—Miss Maxton—what a dweadful hurwy you're in.

CARRIE. Of course I am. The most important event of the whole year takes place to-night, which decides our fortunes for another twelve-month.

BEAUMER. Aw—what is it?

CARRIE. Stirring the Christmas plum pudding. You and Mr. Douglas, and Maggie, and Harry, and every one, are to come into the kitchen and give a stir. It's a glorious old custom.

BEAUMER. Aw—is it? (*Aside.*) Barbarwous ideah!

CARRIE. Now, do be more careful, Captain Beaumer. You're

spilling the brandy.

BEAUMER. Aw— (*Aside.*) Confound the bwandy! (*Aloud.*) What is it for? Any one ill?

CARRIE. Ill? No: why, it is to put in the pudding.

BEAUMER. Aw—good gwacious! And what is this for? (*Holding up spoon.*)

CARRIE. Now what should you think it was for?

BEAUMER. Haven't an ideah.

CARRIE. Haven't you? Poor man! Well, we generally use a spoon like that to stir things up with.

BEAUMER. Aw—good gwacious! and here's another. (*Brings another spoon out of his tail pocket.*) Won't you carwy one of them?

CARRIE. No, thanks. Come along. We are keeping everything waiting.

BEAUMER. Aw—look here—I say—you don't expect me to go into a kitchen and manipulate the waw materwial of a horwid pudding?

CARRIE. Of course I do: is it so very dreadful?

BEAUMER. I—aw—weally never contemplated being asked to do such a thing.

CARRIE. How sad! And it requires so much contemplation, doesn't it?

BEAUMER. It wather takes away one's bweath. You might have bwoken it by degwees.

CARRIE. What are you afraid of? Beetles?

BEAUMER. Good gwacious! Are there beetles in the pudding?

CARRIE. No, but there are plenty in the kitchen. Are you fond of it?

BEAUMER? What? Beetles?

CARRIE. No. Pudding.

BEAUMER. Awfully. Aren't you?

CARRIE. Awfully.

BEAUMER. Aw—I say—what do you put in it, eh? Curwants?

CARRIE. Yes. Currants, raisins, eggs, flour, citron, apples—all sorts of things.

BEAUMER. And bwandy? Aw—how many bottles of bwandy are there in a pudding?

CARRIE. Well, really Captain Beaumer, that depends so entirely upon the size of the pudding, that if you particularly wish to know, I shall have to give you the proportionate parts. To every five pounds of flour you must add two pounds of ——

BEAUMER. No, no—weally—I don't think I care to know. And all

these things get mixed up together, eh?

CARRIE. Yes.

BEAUMER. By Jove—awfully wum, isn't it? Which of the ingwedients do you suppose attwacts the beetles?

CARRIE. I can't imagine. Perhaps the mixture as a whole has a fatal fascination for them. Is it a riddle?

BEAUMER. No. I think it must be the curwants.

CARRIE. Yes? Why?

BEAUMER. Aw—don't know why—only thought it might be. There's always something awfully beetle-ey about curwants.

CARRIE. What a clever theory. Come along: let us see if it works in practice.

BEAUMER. Good gwacious! You didn't weally mean it? Is it so verwy necessarwy?

CARRIE. Of course it is. And what have I told you about "good gwacious"? If you are obliged to use the expression, can't you say "gracious"?

BEAUMER. Aw—I'll twy.

CARRIE. You mean "try."

BEAUMER. Yaas, I suppose so.

CARRIE. I shall never teach you English. You're a dreadfully backward pupil.

BEAUMER. Aw—I thought you might object if I was forward.

CARRIE. I don't believe it is possible.

BEAUMER. (*Aside.*) By Jove—aw—I've a gweat mind to twy again. (*Aloud.*) I—aw—learn something everwy day.

CARRIE. Indeed! How interesting! What have you been learning lately?

BEAUMER. (*Aside.*) I *will* twy. (*Aloud.*) To love you.

CARRIE. (*Aside.*) I knew he had. (*Aloud.*) I don't believe it.

BEAUMER. Aw—do be serwious—weally—honestly—Carwie—I——

CARRIE. What? What was that? What did you call me?

BEAUMER. Carwie.

CARRIE. And how dare you take such a liberty as to call me that?

BEAUMER. Aw—I say—I——

CARRIE. I never was so insulted in all my life.

BEAUMER. (*Frightened.*) Good gwacious!—I mean "gracious"—don't. (*Aside.*) What an ass I was to twy it again! (*Aloud.*) I won't do it again: I'll call you Miss Maxton.

CARRIE. Indeed you won't. After this I don't want ever to hear you call me Miss Maxton again.

BEAUMER. (*Aside.*) She's awfully angwy: I might have known I'd come a cwopper. (*Aloud.*) Aw—what am I to do then?

CARRIE. (*Slyly.*) Can't you say Carrie?

BEAUMER. Aw—said Carwie.

CARRIE. Yes, but that isn't Ca*rr*ie.

BEAUMER. Ah! I'll twy—that is "t*ry*." Carwie—no, Carrie: how's that?

CARRIE. That's much better.

BEAUMER. Think so?

CARRIE. Yes: you're getting on.

BEAUMER. Yaas—much better than generwally. I'll try again:—Carrie—Carrie—Carrie—

CARRIE. That will do for the present. Ah! I know what you've been doing.

BEAUMER. Aw—what?

CARRIE. You've been rehearsing to old Mrs. Smith's donkey again.

BEAUMER. No—weally. Is the—aw—animal alive still?

CARRIE. Yes, I think he got over it. Oh! Captain Beaumer, shall you ever forget that day?

BEAUMER. Never. I've been a wetched cwiminal ever since.

CARRIE. A criminal?

BEAUMER. Yaas. But never mind: I'm getting used to it. I've—aw—had thwee years.

CARRIE. Three years what? Imprisonment?

BEAUMER. No: wemorse.

CARRIE. Oh! I don't believe Maggie will ever forget Reuben Harleigh.

BEAUMER. Poor old Weuben. It was awfu ly sad. Don't let's talk of that. Let me twy and say Carrie again.

CARRIE. Not now. The plum pudding demands immediate attention. Come, Captain Beaumer, I'll race you into the kitchen for a pair of gloves.

[*Exit* CARRIE.

BEAUMER. (*Alone.*) Wace! Not if I know it—never wace. She is weally a verwy nice little girl, and I may get marwied this time: but wace—no, I can't wace: and stir the beetles—I mean the pudding—no, I *won't* wace. Poor old Weuben! I can't help thinking of him: I can't help thinking of the whole of that day when I got Jerwemiah to pick up those pieces of paper. I wonder where those bits of paper are. I put them carefully into a secwet pocket at the back of my coat, so that I should be sure to know where they were. Then I got so excited

that I forgot all about them, and gave the coat to Stwatton, and Stwatton sold it, and was never able to wecover it. Verwy aggwavating—verwy.

[*Enter* STRATTON, BEAUMER'S *valet*.]

BEAUMER. Ah, come heah, Stwatton.

STRATTON. Yes, sir.

BEAUMER. I want to know, Stwatton, if you have ever heard anything more of that old shooting coat I gave you the day Mr. Douglas came into his pwoperty.

STRATTON. Not a word, sir, although I made every enquiry. As I told you, sir, I thought you wouldn't mind much what became of it: and as it was louder than I could wear myself, I ——

BEAUMER. Quite wight, Stwatton, quite wight. You sold it to the village tailor.

STRATTON. Begging your pardon, sir—haffected a hexchange, sir, if you will hexcuse me—not sold. I gave 'im the shooting coat and ceteras, and he gave me a suit more respectable like and hapropose of my situation.

BEAUMER. And you never heard of it again?

STRATTON. No, sir. There was a heflux of farm labourers to Ameriky just then, and Mr. Smith the tailor thought as how he must have disposed of it to one of them. I was sorry I had sold—leastways changed it, when you said as how it was most important as you should have it back, sir.

BEAUMER. There was something in the pocket—that secwet pocket that had made in the back—that I wanted.

STRATTON. I think you must be mistook, sir, if you'll hexcuse my saying so. There didn't happear to be nothink in the pockets—and I generally look to see—particular that secret pocket, except a few pieces of torn up paper, and such like rubbish.

BEAUMER. Yaas: that's just it. That will do, Stwatton: you can go.

[*Exit* STRATTON.

BEAUMER. Aw—Stwatton is getting too wefined for me. To have the evidence of a cwime that cost me a wetched half hour in a twee, and half a cwown as well, go to Amerwica on the back of a fwowzy emigwant. It is enough to dwive any one cwazy. If I had that letter I could expose that scoundwel Marks. Sir Harwy is awfully miserwable, and Marks won't let him alone. What an ass I was to —— (*a knock is heard at window*). Good gwacious! What's that? There's some one at the window. (*He opens the window: it is snowing hard, and the wind drives the snow into the room. Enter* REUBEN HARLEIGH. *His*

clothes are threadbare, his cheeks and eyes hollow, &c.: he is ill and weak. He stands hesitating in the window.) Aw—I say—what is this? (*Harleigh takes a step forward.*) Weally, my good man—this is outwageous—you must weally stop outside.

HARLEIGH. Let me come in for a minute or two, Captain Beaumer: I'll not stay long.

BEAUMER. Captain Beaumer? The man seems to know me. What is your ——? (*Starting.*) Why, good gwacious! What is this—the ghost of Weuben Harleigh?

HARLEIGH. No—no ghost, though very like it.

BEAUMER. Harleigh! Weuben! Is it you—alive again? It can't be.

HARLEIGH. Aye, it is Reuben Harleigh—all that is left of him.

BEAUMER. Why, we thought there was nothing left at all. Let me feel you. Good gwacious! Come in, of course; sit by the fire and get warm, old boy. It is bitterly cold to-night.

HARLEIGH. Yes, it is cold: but I'm used to it.

BEAUMER. And you are wet thwough.

HARLEIGH. Yes. I'm used to that too.

BEAUMER. Used to it? Nonsense! Sit down here. (*Makes him sit by fire.*) Here, old boy, twy some of his bwandy—plum pudding bwandy; it will put fwesh life into you. There's nothing to dwink it out of. Ah, this spoon—plum pudding spoon. Put it all down. To think of your turning up like this. There, that's better than the fwost and snow outside.

HARLEIGH. (*Grasping his hand.*) God bless you, Captain Beaumer.

BEAUMER. I say, dwop that, old fellow. Call me Jack, as you used to. I can't believe it: why, we all thought you were dead.

HARLEIGH. It might be better if I were: but there won't be long to wait now, anyway.

BEAUMER. Don't, old boy, don't talk that way. Cheer up.

HARLEIGH. Cheer up?

BEAUMER. Yes: don't you wemember what jolly times we used to have? Let us be merwy as we were then.

HARLEIGH. Merry? Beaumer—Jack, do I look as if I had much cause for merriment—I, whom the parish could arrest for being without means of livelihood—a ragged vagabond without the strength to get employment—without the heart that sometimes takes the place of strength? You would have me laugh and sing, eh? It would be as wholesome as the grin and rattle of a death's head. What a mockery to tell me to be merry! What day is this?

BEAUMER. Christmas Eve, and you are back again in your own old village, among old fwiends. Cheer up.

HARLEIGH. Christmas Eve! A time when men forget their toil and trouble, when happy faces gather around the hearth, when tables groan, when English welcome stamps its mark on every one. Christmas Eve! Four years ago *I* had a Christmas Eve.

BEAUMER. The old place is just the same, Weuben. It hasn't altered a bit.

HARLEIGH. Aye, the old place is the same, but I—I have changed. I am here to-night because I am a beggar, because I must see Sir Harry Maxton, and ask him for the sake of days gone by, to give me work to do upon his land—perhaps on land that once was mine—that I may not have to beg for br ad.

BEAUMER. Don't talk so, old fellow: don't, please: it is horwible. You shall come with me. There is plenty of woom in my chambers in London.

HARLEIGH. God bless you, Jack—look at what I am. Do you think I look a fit guest for London chambers? I tell you I am a beggar, without a shilling in the world—without the right to live. I was a fool to come back here, but I thought I could stand it better. Had it not been for poor old Matthew, I should have stayed out there, and died where I was unknown.

BEAUMER. Is old Matthew still alive?

HARLEIGH. Ah, yes, God bless him! Oh, Jack, if you could know the courage and fidelity with which that dear old man has clung to me through every hardship and privation—the dangers he has faced with me—his cheering words of hope—"it'll all come right, Muster Reuben, it'll all come right"; if you had seen the yearning look of love for his young mast r, as he still insisted on calling me, you would have said there could be no devotion more sublime or beautiful.

BEAUMER. I always knew he was a wegular bwick.

HARLEIGH. As his step grew feebler, and his sight more dim, I could see by the moisture in his eye or a quiver of the lip—for he never uttered a complaint—that he was longing for the old place once again.

BEAUMER. Poor old fellow.

HARLEIGH. One day, when I was lying weak and helpless after an attack of fever, I happened to wake up, and saw him standing by the door with something in his hand on which the tears were falling fast. I called to him, and asked him what it was. It was a picture of the little village, with the church and school, taken from Ten Acre Lot. And then I asked him if we should go back: with a cry of joy he threw

himself upon my neck and sobbed as if his heart would break. So we came back, poorer than any labourer who worked on my old land.

BEAUMER. Never mind, old boy : don't be down-spirwited : it will all come wight : everwy one will be wejoiced to see you. There's Maggie Douglas and her father ——

HARLEIGH. Don't, Jack—don't, man. I cannot stand that. (*After a pause.*) Is—is—she—married?

BEAUMER. Good gwacious, no. Didn't she pwomise to wait for your weturn, and is she the girl to bweak her word? Now that you are back, everwything will come stwaight. You and Maggie will be marwied, and ——

HARLEIGH, Married? I? What do you mean? Don't mock me, Jack. Do I look like one who has the right to seek a woman's love? Are these the garments that a lover wears to woo his mistress in? Shall I take her hand, and lead her through vast galleries where the foot falls silently on woven rugs, and where the eye is soothed with all the harmony of luxury and art? Shall I lead her to the garden terraces, point out the beauties of the marble portico, or wander through hot-houses where the senses feed on strawberries and pines at Christmas time? Then shall I turn to her with pride, and say, "All this is mine: I give it to you"?

BEAUMER. Don't be so awfully bitter, old boy. It isn't like you.

HARLEIGH. Aye, it is bitter—God forgive me. But if I would not marry Maggie Douglas because I was too poor before I went away, do you think that I would do so now, when charity alone can give me food and shelter on a night like this? No, no, man—a thousand times no! If she thinks me dead, dead I will remain to her for ever. (*After a pause.*) Is the old man alive?

BEAUMER. Yes : he was here just now, and ——

HARLEIGH. Here? Is he staying here—in this house?

BEAUMER. Yaas.

HARLEIGH. And *she*—where is *she?*

BEAUMER. In the kitchen with the beetles. Why, good gwacious, what is the matter?

HARLEIGH. She here—under the same roof with me, where I might meet her any moment? (*Starting up.*) I must go, at once. Jack, I must go. Good-bye.

BEAUMER. Go? Go where, old man?

HARLEIGH. Anywhere. Back again to the frost and snow—into the darkness—into the earth—anywhere where I may be hidden away that she may not see me. Let me go. Don't you understand? I

must go—I will go.

BEAUMER. (*Holding him back.*) Good gwacious, Weuben, but I say you shan't go. Don't be in such a hurwy, old boy. Come to my woom: no one will disturb us, and we can talk quietly there. Come.

HARLEIGH. (*Excited.*) Quick, then—quick! I dare not meet her: I have not strength. (*Bursting into sobs.*) Oh, Jack, I love her so—I love her so.

BEAUMER. (*Soothing him.*) Yes, yes, old boy, I know. Come: you are thorwoughly worn out. Come.

[*Exeunt*, BEAUMER *supporting* HARLEIGH.

[*Enter* SIR HARRY *and* MAGGIE.]

SIR H. I am afraid, Miss Douglas, that you must think us very childish to retain all these old Christmas customs?

MAGGIE. Indeed, I do not, Sir Harry: I love them all. They act as a link between the present and the past. Are we so wise in our generation that we can afford to despise the precepts and customs of our ancestors?

SIR H. But the world thinks more of its present and future than of its past.

MAGGIE. The greater is its need to be reminded of the past. It augurs badly for the man, when the child forgets its parents.

SIR H. I am afraid you are a pessimist.

MAGGIE. No, I am not. The world, I know, is much more learned than it was, much more scientific. But all this learning seems to leave no room for the wisdom—the true wisdom of our ancestors.

SIR H. How so?

MAGGIE. Men believe in nothing now unless it can be proved by syllogism, or reduced to principles: they must see, or touch, a thing before they will believe in its existence. This system gives birth to all the learning of the age.

SIR H. And our forefathers?

MAGGIE. — were wiser because they knew their own ignorance: because they knew that what is deepest and noblest in our nature and destiny is based on something more mysterious than a surgeon's scalpel, or the rule of three. Faith was the keystone of their wisdom.

SIR H. But they were very superstitious.

MAGGIE. Superstition is but distorted faith—surely better than no faith at all.

SIR H. (*Laughing.*) Much better—for had it not been for superstition, we should not have been stirring the plum pudding, and I might not have had this chance of speaking with you. (*Becoming*

serious.) But sometimes I think that I would give the world if there had been no past for me—or if I could forget it all.

MAGGIE. Is it so very painful to look back upon?

SIR H. (*Sadly*.) Yes.

MAGGIE. You think that you would take a different course, if you could start afresh?

SIR H. Far different.

MAGGIE. So would we all. But why wish to *forget* the past? Why should we destroy the chart that we have marked with every dangerous spot, and wish to start from port again *without* its warning aid? The bitterness of experience is offset by its worth.

SIR H. But if the vessel be already damaged on the rocks—if the master be unworthy and incapable—if her planks be started—if the water be gaining in her hold, and she be settling deeper in the ocean hour by hour—of what use then is the chart where we have marked the place she struck? Would we not long to be in port again, that we might start afresh—even without the chart—and take our chances of the rocks and shoals?

MAGGIE. Ah, there the metaphor breaks down. Your second voyage might be made without a sign of danger; but do you think that you could live your life again, and not encounter trial and temptation. In life there's no such thing as chance: and memory of the past will help us when the trial comes.

SIR H. (*Quietly*.) Ah, yes: thank you. (*After a pause*.) Miss Douglas, *I* have struck upon the rocks—I have drifted on from bad to worse, from want of courage to look danger in the face. Will you help me to reach the land?

MAGGIE. I, Sir Harry? What can I do?

[REUBEN HARLEIGH *enters at back and overhears them*.]

SIR H. You can do everything. When you speak to me, it gives me courage, resolution—all I need. If I could have you always by to give me strength, I would try to be worthy of your goodness.

MAGGIE. I think I understand what you mean, Sir Harry.

SIR H. I mean that I would ask you to be my wife. With you to share it, life would be so quiet, so peaceful, so lovely. I can offer you nothing but my love: these estates will be no longer mine: (*with a sad smile*) they struck upon the rocks when I did. If you take my offer, I—strange as it may seem—have a condition to impose:—it is, that you will never ask me to accept one shilling of your fortune to redeem these lands. If I would strive to keep a remnant of my honour, and be worthy you, these lands must go.

MAGGIE. Thank you, Sir Harry. But I shall never marry.

SIR H. Pardon me, if I mention it; but your father bade me say he hoped—hoped your answer would be different.

MAGGIE. My father—does he—wish—it so?

SIR H. Yes.

MAGGIE. (*After a pause.*) Sir Harry, if the days that are gone by are full of sorrow and regret for you, I too have painful memories—memories that sometimes fill my eyes with tears and choke my voice—memories that are too sacred to be put in words—memories that speak gently and reproachfully. If I were to give my hand, my heart could not go with it.

SIR H. I would strive in time to win it.

MAGGIE.. It would not be worth winning.

SIR H. May I try?

MAGGIE. Why should you care to?

SIR H. Because I love you—because you are my ideal of gentle womanhood—because I know my own weakness in time of trial, and would make your strength mine—because I may have wronged you.

MAGGIE. Wronged me?

SIR H. Yes—perhaps: and because I know your past, and reverence its sorrow.

MAGGIE. Ah!

SIR H. May I not tell your father that his hope will be fulfilled? Let his wish plead for me.

MAGGIE. My father? Yes, if anything that I can do will bring him happiness, it shall be done.

SIR H. And you will be my wife?

MAGGIE. (*Sadly.*) Yes, I will be your wife.

[*Exit* HARLEIGH *at back, overcome. Carol singers are heard softly with Christmas hymn.*]

SIR H. (*Quietly.*) Thank you—thank you. I did not mean to open up old wounds, believe me. I do not look for love just yet. It would be unreasonable, and do dishonour to your nature, to ask you to forget the dead so lightly. But when time has taken off the keenness of the sorrow, you will give me the right to help you bear the memory of the past. (*Sadly.*) I could be so good a nurse.

MAGGIE. (*Desperately.*) Leave me now, Sir Harry—leave me, I implore you, and forgive me if I have seemed unkind or harsh: I did not mean it. Every one is so kind to me, and I have so little to give them in return.

SIR H. You have given me far more than I ever had a right to hope

for. [*Kisses her hand and exit.*

MAGGIE. (*After a pause—passionately.*) Oh, Reuben, Reuben, my love! My heart is yours wherever you may be: it is with you in the spirit world, where true hearts know no sorrow or parting. I do not wrong you, my love. It is for his sake—my dear old father's sake, whom we both love. Reuben, I seem to feel you near me now—your presence fills the room. Oh, Reuben, if your spirit hears me—if it is given you to minister to those who suffer here below—speak to me now, send me some sign or token of approval if I do your will, of forgiveness if I give offense. (*She pauses: only carol singers heard.*) No, no, he cannot hear me—he cannot come to me: there is no sign—no sound but that of praise to God—of tidings of good will to men. The dead can neither hear nor answer. (*Frantically.*) Ah! There's no air here; I must have air. (*Rushes to back, pulls back curtain, and opens window.* HARLEIGH *is seen standing, in the moonlight, leaning against a tree, bare-headed, with the snow falling on him. He lifts his head.* MAGGIE *starts.*) Ha! The sign! Ha! Reuben! Reuben! Come to me! No; see, he turns away. Ha! It is his spirit—his spirit come to warn me. Reuben! Reuben! Ha!

(*She shrieks, lets the curtain fall back across the window, and falls in a swoon. The others rush in: old* DOUGLAS *raises her in his arms:* BEAUMER *pulls back curtain and looks out:* HARLEIGH *has vanished.*)

(END OF ACT II.)

ACT III.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

SCENE.—*Same as in Act II. New Year's Eve. Hay makers of Act I, and other rustics, in their best clothes, having a country dance. Fiddlers, &c., on raised platform at back. After dance, enter* BEAUMER *and* CARRIE. CARRIE *goes round, speaking to every one, taking* BEAUMER *with her.*

CARRIE. How do you do, Mrs. Smith? So glad to see you out again, and the quinzy gone. Captain Beaumer, this is Mrs. Smith.

BEAUMER. Aw—gweat pleasure—delighted—aw—(*disgusted*).

CARRIE. (*Going round.*) Here's Farmer Wurzle too. Mr. Wurzle, Sir Harry said those winter cabbages you sent us were the finest he had

ever seen.

WURZLE. Aye, if they pesky slugs hadn't got at the roots.

CARRIE. You know Farmer Wurzle, Captain Beaumer. Shake hands with him.

BEAUMER. Aw—yaas—certainly ——

WURZLE. (*To Beaumer.*) Maybe you bean't aware as they danged slugs has done a powerful lot o' damage this winter.

CARRIE. (*Going round.*) And here's Mrs. Johnson—and you've brought the baby too. Let me look at it:—what a dear little thing: and it has its father's eyes too, hasn't it? Do look, Captain Beaumer, isn't it a little beauty?

BEAUMER. Yaas—suppose so.

CARRIE. You must really kiss it.

BEAUMER. (*Objecting.*) Oh—look here—I say ——

CARRIE. You really must: mustn't he, Mrs. Johnson? Mrs. Johnson doesn't mind.

BEAUMER. Doesn't she? (*Aside.*) Aw—wish she did. (*Aloud.*) Aw—it is going to squeak.

CARRIE. No, it is only holding up its mouth, and smiling.

BEAUMER. (*Aside.*) This is horwible. (*Kisses it: all laugh. Aside.*) It is worse than the plum pudding.

JERRY. (*Coming forward awkwardly, and wiping his hand ready to shake.*) Haw! haw! haw!

BEAUMER. Aw—Jerwemiah—I should say Jerry, though, eh? How de do?

JERRY. Noicely, sir, thank 'ee—noicely. But oi be called Jeremiah now. He! he!

BEAUMER. Aw—thought you were called Jerwy, and—aw—your father Jerwemiah.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw!—so oi were, muster, so oi were. But feather he be dead, and *oi* be Jeremiah now. He! he!

BEAUMER. Aw—I am verwy sorwy—I mean glad—good gwacious! I don't know which he expects me to be.

JERRY. My young 'un, as is a comin', he'll be Jerry now: and when oi be dead, he'll be Jeremiah too.

BEAUMER. Good gwacious! (*Aside.*) Aw—verwy curwious instance of bucolic pride—a wegular case of herweditarwy title and pwimogeniture among the pwoletarwiat. (*Aloud.*) Have you—aw—been like this *very* long, Jerwemiah?

JERRY. No, sir, thank 'ee. It be what they calls a innivation, along o' that there eddication.

BEAUMER. Aw—verwy satisfactorwy.

JERRY. That it be, muster—that it be. But we be kind o' muddled up on one pint. Maybe as you can help us a bit.

BEAUMER. Aw—yaas? (*Aside.*) Verwy pwoper spirwit of dependence.

JERRY. Me and t' old 'ooman was a talkin' t' other day, and oi sez "Maria," oi sez, "this 'ere innivation"—that's what they calls it—"this 'ere innivation be a powerful good thing." "Yes, Jeremiah," says she, "it be good enough, if so be as things comes accordin': but cases has been," says she, "what 'ud upsot that there innivation terrible." "What be they?" sez oi: and Maria—she be terrible larned, Maria be—she sez, "Jeremiah," she sez, "how 'ud that there innivation work, if *so be as there was to be twins?*"

BEAUMER. (*Seriously.*) Aw—I'll think it over.

JERRY. Thank 'ee, if ye would. And oi say, muster, yer aint got no more o' they little jobs on hand, have ye? He! he!

BEAUMER. Aw—beg pardon—little ——?

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw!—pickin' up they little bits o' paper. He! he!

BEAUMER. (*With dignity.*) Jerwemiah, you pwesume.

JERRY. Haw! haw! haw! That were the best day's work oi ever done. Half a crown for pickin' up they bits o' paper! That *were* a good 'un, that were! He! he!

BEAUMER. Oh, yaas. Ha! ha! that were a good 'un! (*Aside.*) Confound him! (*Aloud.*) Jerwemiah, you can wetiah. (*Aside.*) Jerwemiah has not impwoved with education.

CARRIE. (*Coming forward.*) Captain Beaumer, we are going to have one more dance before our friends go into the hall for supper. I want to introduce you to a partner.

BEAUMER. (*Horrified.*) No, no—look heah, Carwie—you know—damn it! ——

CARRIE. Captain Beaumer, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

BEAUMER. Well, hang it, we must dwaw the line *somewhere.*

CARRIE. Yes—after the dance. Every one else has a partner: there's one lady left.

BEAUMER. If I have got to dance, I won't dance with any one but you.

CARRIE. Oh, I am engaged to Mr. Jeremiah Ruts.

BEAUMER. Jerwemiah can't dance.

JERRY. Yes, oi can, muster: it be part o' eddication now.

BEAUMER. (*Resignedly.*) Who is the girl, then?

CARRIE. Miss Simpkinson.

BEAUMER. Good gwacious! No! Why, she's a million, if she's a day.

CARRIE. Now—to oblige me (*insinuatingly*), Jack.

BEAUMER. (*Resigned.*) Oh, verwy well:—intwoduce me. (*They retire up. The fiddlers begin: dancers take their places.*)

CARRIE. Stop! stop! stop! Where's the bassoon! Who plays the bassoon in chapel?

ALL. Jim does, miss.

CARRIE. Where is he—isn't he here?

JIM. Here oi be, miss. (*Coming forward.*)

CARRIE. Why, how is it, Jim, that you haven't brought your bassoon?

JIM. Well, miss oi (*hesitating*)—oi—have brought it.

CARRIE. And why won't you play on it?

JIM. Well, miss, oi don't think as no one'll ever play on that there implement agin.

CARRIE. Why not, Jim?

JIM. Well, miss - you ask Farmer Wurzle. Maybe he'll tell 'ee.

CARRIE. What do you know about it, Mr. Wurzle?

WURZLE. Well, Miss Carrie, I've been leadin' bass in that there meetin' house choir for more'n twenty year, and as long as they kep' themselves to fiddles, cornets, and trombones, there warn't a member o' that there meetin' house could say as I didn't do my duty, and keep ahead of 'em. They notes o' mine could be heerd in the Chequers' parlour, round the corner. But a year ago, when I seed that man come into choir wi' that there great bit o' brass, I knew as there'd be war in that there meetin' house. One of us had got to go. Jim there, he wouldn't go, and I wouldn't go. Well, I stood it all this year, a tryin' to get ahead of him, until I ain't hardly got no voice left. Last Sunday I swore as how we'd have a change this year, and as I was thinkin' how it was to be done, I sot down casually on Jim's seat, where he'd put the implement for safety. Accident *is* accident, Miss Carrie; *but I don't think we'll have no bassoon this year.* (*Jim produces bassoon, crushed out of all shape. All laugh. The dance begins, Beaumer trying to dance with Carrie, and getting hold of Jerry instead.*

(*At conclusion of dance, enter* SIR HARRY, *old* DOUGLAS, *and* MAGGIE. SIR HARRY *and* MAGGIE *lead* DOUGLAS *to easy chair. The rustics give three cheers for* SIR HARRY.)

SIR H. Thank you, my friends, thank you—and a hearty welcome to you all. Let every one enjoy himself to-night. Let there be no stint. Let good-fellowship and honest happiness be in the heart of each of you: and if any of you have a grudge against his fellow, let him leave it on the threshold, and forget to take it up again. Supper is ready for you in the hall, and may an English appetite be ready for the supper. Before the clock strikes twelve, I wish you all to meet again in this old room, to see the New Year in. As you all know, the custom is an old one with us. Let each one feel himself at home—and, once more, to all a hearty welcome! (*Rustics give three more cheers, and exeunt for supper: aside, sadly.*) What would I give, if my conscience could give lungs to such an honest shout as that! Will it ever come again? It *shall*. (*Goes to Maggie and Douglas: Maggie is sitting on a stool at her father's feet. The servants hand round tea.*)

CARRIE. (*To* BEAUMER, *who is sitting by her absent-mindedly.*) Captain Beaumer, what *is* the matter with you? Look me in the face, now: there is something on your mind;—yes, there is: don't try to deceive me.

BEAUMER. (*Miserably.*) I don't, Carrie.

CARRIE. I am sure to find you out. For the last four or five days you have looked like some guilty, conscience-stricken criminal. What does it mean, now? If you really care for my good opinion, I insist on knowing what it means.

BEAUMER. (*Uneasily.*) Not to-night—New Year's Eve. (*Dismally.*) Let us be jolly.

CARRIE. Jolly? Why, you act as a blanket, the humidity of which would drive a rheumatic to his grave at once.

BEAUMER. No—weally. Let's have a song. Do sing something.

CARRIE. Shall I play the Dead March, or the "Battle of Prague, with the cries and groans of the wounded and dying"?

BEAUMER. (*Dismally.*) No—something wollicking.

CARRIE. Wollicking, indeed! And what did you mean the other day by saying that you had been a wretched criminal for three years, eaten up by remorse?

SIR H. Carrie, what are you two quarrelling about there?

CARRIE. Oh, nothing, Harry. Only Captain Beaumer is inclined to be so uproariously merry, that I am trying to keep him within bounds.

BEAUMER. Miss Maxton is so awfully severe on me for not being conversationally more bwilliant.

MAGGIE. (*Sadly.*) I think we are all thoughtful. There is always something sad in the death of the old year: it affects us all more or less. It is like losing the touch of an old familiar hand. We have no secrets from it—it knows our joys and sorrows. If we have been happy and prosperous, we say "good-bye" to it, not knowing whether the new, strange year may be our friend or enemy. If we have had suffering and anguish and parting, and the old year dies and leaves us suffering still, how can we trust our sorrows and look for help to to a stranger who has not known our wants and trials? The death of the old year seems like the death of all our hopes.

DOUGLAS. (*Yearningly.*) No, no, Maggie—don't say so. The old year dies, but the new one is born with the bright beams of hope shining on its head. It marks not the death but the birth of Hope.

MAGGIE. Hope deferred, dear, that maketh the heart sick.

DOUGLAS. (*Wistfully.*) But, hope, Maggie: is it not still hope?

MAGGIE. (*Kissing him fondly and sadly.*) Not for me, dear—not for me.

SIR H. (*Aside.*) Poor girl! She is thinking of Harleigh.

BEAUMER. (*Desperately, aside.*) Good gwacious, I can't stand this any longer. (*Aloud.*) Miss Douglas—Sir Harry—I ——

SIR H. (*Aside.*) Coward that I am!—let me be a man. (*Aloud.*) Jack, come with me: I have something important to tell you. (*Aside.*) I cannot bear this secret any longer.

BEAUMER. I was just going to say, Sir Harry, that ——

SIR H. (*Impatiently taking him by the arm.*) Yes, yes, old fellow—come outside. I have something to say to you at once.

[*Exeunt* SIR HARRY *and* BEAUMER.

CARRIE. (*Indignantly.*) Well! I must say Jack is developing an attitude of indifference to me that is not to be tolerated. We must come to an understanding. This is the most dismal New Year's Eve I have ever spent, since the one when I was in bed with the mumps. Every one seems to be thinking of something doleful, and they won't be sociable and tell me what it is. We might be on the eve of an execution. The hall is the only place where there is any life. I'll go and get up a flirtation with Jeremiah. [*Exit* CARRIE.

DOUGLAS. Maggie darling, I can't bear to see you so sad and miserable. What is, eh—what is it?

MAGGIE. Nothing, dear—nothing.

DOUGLAS. Nothing? Is—is—it—Reuben you are thinking of?

MAGGIE. Oh, father, if I only knew for certain that he was dead, I think that I could bear it better. We only hear a rumor—the rest is

darkness: we are told that he is dead, but cannot prove it, and the suspense is killing me. Oh, father, dear old father, I have tried so very hard to keep this to myself, and save you from the pain of knowing it. But now, I cannot—cannot. Do not think me ungrateful, for I do love you dearly—God knows I do;—but when I am alone, I sit and dream of those old days;—the old brightness and sunshine have gone, and if it were not for you, dear, I should wish that I were dead.

DOUGLAS. (*Soothing her: stroking her hair.*) Hush! Hush!

MAGGIE. It seems so long ago,—so long ago.

DOUGLAS. I loved him, Maggie, too;—but it was not to be.

MAGGIE. There must be means of proving it, or I will not believe it.

DOUGLAS. Ah, Maggie, if it had not been so we should have heard ——

MAGGIE. Father, do you believe that those we love, who die, can come again?

DOUGLAS. How, Maggie—come again?

MAGGIE. Cannot God, who placed the spirit in man's body, and receives his gift again, send back this self same spirit to the world, to comfort those who mourn?

DOUGLAS. Doubtless, if it be His will, Maggie.

MAGGIE. (*With awe of conviction.*) Father, I am *sure* of it. I do not mean that we should traffic with the spirits of those whom He has called away, and seek their mediation and advice, as Saul did that of Samuel: that were to do a deadly sin, and meet the end of Saul. But if we pray to Him, knowing our helplessness and need of light—if we cast all the burden of our sorrow upon Him, and know that he will hear and answer in His own good time—father, the light *will* come, for He himself has told us so.

DOUGLAS. Doubt it not, my child, for *I* have found it so.

MAGGIE. (*With great awe.*) Father, last week I saw him.

DOUGLAS. Saw whom, Maggie?

MAGGIE. Reuben.

DOUGLAS. Reuben? Maggie!

MAGGIE. Yes, I saw him. It was the evening Sir Harry asked me to be his wife—when I told him I would marry him. When he had gone, it seemed to me as if some subtle spirit passed across the room, and touched me on the heart. A great doubt seized me, that I stood upon the threshold of a wrong that would for ever shut me out from peace and hope. I fell upon my knees, and prayed for guidance to act rightly. Still no answer came. The room seemed growing smaller, and the walls seemed pressing on my breast like bands of steel. I could

not breathe—I could not see—I felt as if all things were finished. I heard the subtle spirit whisper "air, air!"—I rushed blindly to the window, and threw it open. The clear, cold blast was giving life to me again, when—there—out there—I saw *him*, dear—out in the cold and snow—and he looked, oh, so sad and ill and hungry; and his clothes were thin and worn, and the cruel wind was driving the snow upon his bare head. I was here in the warm, and I could not bear it. I called out to him to come to me, and he turned his head away. And then I shrieked, and knew no more, dear, until I found you bending over me.

DOUGLAS. My poor child—my poor child!

MAGGIE. Father, was it a vision to tell me that he was alive and suffering, or his spirit come to assure me of his death? Perhaps he is not dead.

DOUGLAS. It was your brain, Madge: it was fancy that ——

MAGGIE. No, no, it was not fancy. I saw him as plainly as I see you now. But oh, he was so changed—so changed.

DOUGLAS. It could not have been Reuben: it is impossible.

MAGGIE. No, no, it was not Reuben, or he would have come to me: *he* would not have kept me waiting when I called: but it was a warning vision meant for me. Father, I cannot marry Sir Harry, until I know more. I must have proof of Reuben's death. Will you tell him, dear?

DOUGLAS. Maggie, what can I say to him—what will he think?

MAGGIE. Tell him, dear, that I honour him—that I know how good and kind he is, and how ungrateful it must seem. I am sure he will be patient with me: he knows that I can never give him the same love that I gave Reuben: I told him so, dear—I told him that all I had to give him was esteem. And he looked so sad, as if he himself were suffering too: and he never reproached me, but told me so gently that he would not ask for love just yet, but would wait until the old wound had been cured by time. But that will never be, father—never—never.

DOUGLAS. Hush, little one, hush!

MAGGIE. Father, you loved Reuben too. Think of all he did for us when we were poor and friendless: how he took us in, and fed and clothed us: how he spoke such words of cheer and manly sympathy that life came back to us: how he found good buyers for your pictures. Think where we might be but for him. And then he grew to love me—I know not why—and waited, oh, so long before he told me of it: and then I let him go, and wounded him—yes, dear, I wounded him whose only thought had been to pour sweet oil into our wounds, and give us peace instead of pain. Then Uncle Herrick died, and all his wealth was ours, and everything was changed; and *he* stood there,

under that dear old tree where he had told me of his love, and all the world deserted him, except one poor old man. And then—then I knew how much I loved him, when it was too late—too late.

DOUGLAS. (*Aside.*) This agony will kill me.

MAGGIE. Silence is so cold—so cruel—cruel as death.

DOUGLAS. Maggie, there is hope even in the grave.

MAGGIE. I have hoped so long, dear—hoped against reason: and just as hope was dying in me, and I was praying for light, there came this vision.

DOUGLAS. Poor little darling!

MAGGIE. Father, do *you* not believe it?—*you* who have taught me all my trust in Him who tells us to ask and we shall receive. Yes: you do believe it. It *is* an answer—an answer to my prayers for guidance. I know not what it means yet, father: but I *shall* know, if I wait in patience. Will you tell him all this, dear?

DOUGLAS. (*As if inspired by her faith.*) Yes, Maggie, I *will* tell him all. God bless you, daughter, *you* have taught *me* to have faith.

MAGGIE. No, no, it was but for an instant that you doubted.

DOUGLAS. Come; come with me, Maggie, to my room. I have trusted too much to the strength of man: henceforth I leave the matter in God's hands. [*Exeunt* DOUGLAS *and* MAGGIE.

[*Enter* SIR HARRY MAXTON *and* BEAUMER.]

SIR H. That's the whole of the story, Jack: I am glad it's told. And now you know Sir Harry Maxton as he knows himself.

BEAUMER. I have known it all the time.

SIR H. What? You knew that I had torn that letter up—had entered into partnership with Marks to do a felony—and had conspired to marry Maggie Douglas for her money?

BEAUMER. Yaas.

SIR H. Jack, where were you then?

BEAUMER. In the twee.

SIR H. You have known all this, and yet have walked and talked with me, sat at my table, and been my friend? Jack, how have you felt to me?

BEAUMER. (*Holding out his hand.*) Awfully sorwy.

SIR H. And you would take my hand—the hand of crime—now that I have confessed through very weakness?

BEAUMER. Yaas. Why not? You are my fwiend.

SR. H. (*Overcome.*) God bless you, Jack! You would have died before you would have yielded as I did.

BEAUMER. How can I tell?

SIR H. Why do you not despise me as I deserve?

BEAUMER. (*Gently, and holding out his hand again.*) I was not your judge.

SIR H. I—I cannot give you mine, Jack.

BEAUMER. (*Seizing his hand.*) Then I will steal it. What can I do for you?

SIR H. Give me your advice.

BEAUMER. Marks must be cwushed somehow.

SIR H. Yes, but how? Can I marry Maggie Douglas now?

BEAUMER. No: you can't.

SIR H. Must I tell her all the truth?

BEAUMER. Yaas.

SIR H. But that will ruin them. They will never keep the money when they know the truth.

BEAUMER. Yaas. It will wuin them.

SIR H. What can I do then? I will write and tell her there are obstacles to our marriage that cannot be overcome—that I was mad ever to think of it—that I am unworthy of her—that I cannot explain—that she must hate and detest me for bringing this humiliation on her. This is the first thing to be done. Will you help me do that, Jack?

BEAUMER. Yaas.

SIR H. Let me write, then, now—at once.

BEAUMER. Good gwacious!—no—not here. I pwomised Weuben Harleigh I would meet him here, and let no one know of it. Good gwacious! now I've told you.

SIR H. Reuben Harleigh?—meet Reuben Harleigh here? Why, he is dead, Jack! What do you mean?

BEAUMER. No, he's not dead, though he's been very near it. He is alive, and back again, and —— (BEAUMER *goes and sits by fire.*)

[*Enter* HARLEIGH.]

HARLEIGH. — and as poor as ever, Sir Harry. Don't shrink from me—don't think that I've come back to claim acquaintance with you—no, don't think that I shall disgrace you with that. But I want work, Sir Harry—anything that you will give me to do—I don't care what. For the sake of old days give me something to do: you'll not refuse me that, Sir Harry.

[*Enter* MARKS *hurriedly.*]

MARKS. Sir Harry, I must speak with you immediately. Send this fellow, whoever he is, outside, and let him wait. My business is important—most important.

SIR H. (*Aside.*) Now to begin and end the struggle with this man.

(*Aloud*) "This fellow" is *my friend:* and you, sir, take too great a license when you enter on my privacy like this. (HARLEIGH *goes to* BEAUMER.)

MARKS. (*Astonished.*) Sir Harry! My business will not keep—it is of the very highest importance.

SIR H. It will wait outside, until I am at liberty to attend to it.

MARKS. Wait outside? I—Marks—wait outside? What is the meaning of this language, Sir Harry? I don't understand.

SIR H. You will understand it soon enough. Stay: what is your business with me? Speak out, man.

MARKS. Ah, this is no time for foolery, and petty squabbles about etiquette. We stand upon the edge of a precipice, and all our plans, the work of years of patient waiting, are tottering on the brink of it. (*In a whisper.*) Reuben Harleigh has returned.

SIR H. (*Aside.*) I thought so. (*Aloud.*) Well, what of it?

MARKS. What of it? Are you in your senses, Sir Harry, that you can take it as coolly as this? Why, his absence was the one foundation stone on which we have been building all these years. Let him come back, and the whole fabric crashes to the ground, and we are buried in the ruins.

SIR H. Ah!

MARKS. Don't you see, Sir Harry, if Maggie Douglas hears of it, it is as good as a clear loss of £100,000 to us? It is all over the village by this time. That old fool, who went with him, has babbled of it to the village gossips, until the very steeple seems to ring out "Reuben Harleigh." Curse his chattering tongue!

SIR H. (*Coolly, as before.*) Well, what of it?

MARKS. What of it—again? Beat your brains, man—beat your brains. What of it? This: by every pretext, lie, or quibble, we must hurry on this marriage, or we are lost. We must rack our brains to find a key that locks out Reuben Harleigh. Every moment is an hour of danger now.

SIR H. (*As before.*) Well, what of it? Is this all your business with me?

MARKS. All? Sir Harry, are you going mad? What does this mean?

SIR H. It means that I have done with you, and your plots and schemes for ever. You wanted an answer to-night. You shall have it. I throw you off now, once and for all, and defy you to do your worst. I will take the consequences.

MARKS. Hush! You are mad, man—raving mad.

SIR H. No, I am not mad. I am a man again. You, who have

grovelled, like a serpent, on your belly all these years—you, who have crawled into my breast, and dropped the acid poison of your tongue upon my heart—*you* call me mad because I drag your fangs from out my flesh, and put my heel upon your head—aye, even though it tear my heart out with it! You call me mad, because I seize upon the one last chance of life, and strangle you, before your poison fills each vein and artery, and I become a corpse as foul as that of any leper! If this is madness, I pray God that he will ever keep me mad.

MARKS. (*Furious.*) By Heaven, Sir Harry, I ——

SIR H. If you and I were the sole human beings on a desert island straight in the line of the equator's fiercest heat—if nothing but that burning line divided me from you—if on my side lay nothing but a track of arid sand, while you were resting by a spring of clear, cool water under the shadow of a clump of palms—if my skin were blistered by the scorching sun, my tongue dried up with parching thirst and crackling like the kernel of a withered nut—though none were by to see the degradation of the act, I would not drag my limbs across that phantom line, and stoop to you to beg a gourd of water. Am I mad, or do you understand me now?

MARKS. (*Furious.*) This shall be paid for to the very utmost.

SIR H. Why, man, if you could feel the utter loathing that I have for you—you, hardened as you are, would creep away into a corner, and hide your eyes. (*Calming himself by an effort.*) But let all this pass. I would be calm with you. We will have no more passion.

MARKS. (*Furious.*) No more, eh? You think that, do you? But let me tell you there will be a great deal more of it. My fangs are in so deep, that all the surgeons in the world can't save you now. Do you think that you can drag me down, humiliate me, and whip me like a mangy cur before your labourers and friends (*pointing to* BEAUMER *and* HARLEIGH *at back*) and hope that I shall sneak away, and not return the courtesy?

SIR H. (*Quietly.*) Ah, I forgot. This (*pointing to* HARLEIGH) is my friend Reuben Harleigh, about whose death you lied to us.

MARKS. (*Taken aback.*) Eh? What? Harleigh? Here already? So it is. Curse it, what is he doing here—in this house—and Maggie Douglas too? You are a downright fool.

SIR H. Be careful how you speak about Miss Douglas. She was engaged to Mr. Harleigh some four years ago. Is it so wonderful he should return to claim his bride?

MARKS. You fool!

HARLEIGH. (*Coming forward.*) Sir Harry, I thank you, but I have

not come to claim Miss Douglas' hand. I have no right to it.

MARKS. (*To* HARLIGH.) Quite right, young man—quite right. You have a fine sense of honour—I admire you for it. You have no right.

HARLEIGH. Miss Douglas believes me dead, and such I shall always be to her.

MARKS. Quite right—always remain dead. Give me your word of honour that you will always remain dead, and I will ——

SIR H. (*Sternly.*) Silence, man—and leave the room.

BEAUMER. Marks, I would wecommend you to wetire gwacefully.

MARKS. Silence! Leave the room! Never, Sir Harry, while you are in this frame of mind. What do you mean to do?

SIR H. I will tell you what I mean to do. I shall release Miss Douglas from her promise. I shall confess the blackguard part that I've been playing, and try once more to be an honest man. Do you hear? I tell you that before the clock strikes twelve—before the bells ring in the birth of a new year—I shall have done my best to remedy the past. Now, go: and never dare to show yourself within these walls again. Go.

MARKS. And you think that this shall be the end? You forget, perhaps, I have more right within these walls than you yourself. You shall repent this day, Sir Harry: as long as you live you shall repent this day.

SIR H. I shall never repent the day on which I sever all connection with a scoundrel. Leave the room.

MARKS. (*Furiously.*) I will not leave the room. This house is mine, with everything that it contains: it is mortgaged to the last stick and stone and picture: there is not a thing that you can call your own. It is mine—mine, do you hear? Everything is mine: I have bought it all.

SIR H. Then take it all. I do not grudge it now, for by the loss of these estates I have redeemed myself—I have redeemed the honour of our house. But let me warn you to beware of how you claim repayment of the debt. That which is just—that which I owe you legally—I will pay, to the last shilling. But the greater part is founded upon fraud. Beware how you attempt to enforce that.

MARKS. You lie! what proof can you adduce of fraud?

BEAUMER. (*Coming forward.*) I—aw—was a witness to it.

MARKS. You? It is a lie. There was no witness—could not be—if there were, there would be proofs.

BEAUMER. Perhaps there are.

MARKS. Produce them then—show me proofs of fraud—where are they?

BEAUMER. In one of my old coats.

MARKS. Pshaw! Produce your old coat then: where is it?

BEAUMER. In Austwalia or Amerwica.

MARKS. You babble like a fool. Do you take me for a child, that you can play with me like this? Bring your proofs here, sir, and I'll have more to say to you. As to you, Sir Harry, this shall be the blackest day in your existence. You insult me, you throw me over, you defy me, do you? Very well, as you please. We'll see who holds the strongest cards at that—you or I. Get out of my way, fellow! (*To old* MATTHEW *who enters as* MARKS *goes out.* MATTHEW *has on the coat that* BEAUMER *wore in Act I., now very ragged and faded. His hair and beard are long and white, and he leans upon a staff.* BEAUMER *does not notice him but sits by fire.*)

SIR H. Who is this?

MAT. Matthew, sir—I be Matthew—and—why here be Muster Harleigh too.

SIR H. Is this the old man who went with you to America, Harleigh?

MAT. It is, Sir Harry: we didn't mean to intrude like this, but—

SIR H. Let him speak, Harleigh—let him speak. What can I do for you, Matthew? Can I be of any help to you?

MAT. Well, Sir Harry, I do most humbly beg pardon, if I intrudes; but hearin' as you was in want of a gamekeeper, and havin' had a powerful deal to do that way, wi' guns and swords and sich-like in they furren parts, I thought as how—and Lor' love 'ee! why there be Muster Beaumer too. My sarvice to 'ee, sir.

BEAUMER. (*Looking up.*) How are you, Matthew?—glad to—and (*starting up.*) Eh! what? good gwacious, Matthew! Well, good gwacious!!

MAT. Yes, sir, thank 'ee kindly, I be Matthew.

BEAUMER. Matthew, Matthew, where, in the name of all that's wonderful, did you get that coat?

MAT. This 'ere coat, muster?

SIR H. Don't chaff him, Jack.

BEAUMER. Chaff? Good gwacious, I am dweadfully in earnest. Matthew, where did that coat come fwom?

MAT. Where did this 'ere coat come from? Well, it beant as new—

BEAUMER. Where did you get it?

MAT. Why, that there coat be one as I got at Muster Smith's in t' old village 'ere, afore I went to they furren parts.

BEUAMER. (*Excited.*) It is—it is –I knew it the moment I saw it. That is a good coat, Matthew, eh? (*Fingering it anxiously.*)

MAT. Well, Muster Beaumer, it were a good coat: but it be most nigh wore out now.

BEAUMER. Most nigh wore out? Of course, yes, so it is. But I like old coats, Matthew—I collect old coats. When I order a new coat, I always tell my tailor to let it be an old one;—I mean——

SIR H. What are you talking of, Jack?

BEAUMER. (*Excited.*) I don't know—don't interrupt me. I want that coat, Matthew; I must have it.

MAT. Want this 'ere old coat, Muster Beaumer? Lor' love 'ee, sir, it wouldn't be no good to you.

BEAUMER. Yes, yes, it would, Matthew: it would be all the good in the world. Matthew, I have dweamed of that coat; I have eaten and dwunk and lived on that coat for nearly four years; I have gwown thin and haggard on that coat. Matthew, I conjure you to give me that old coat.

SIR H. Jack, are you going crazy?

BEAUMER. Yes—cwazy—mad—dangerwously mad, if I don't get that coat. Matthew, give it me.

MAT. Muster Beaumer, thank 'ee kindly, sir—thank 'ee: maybe you mean well and hearty, and thank 'ee. But this 'ere coat and me has been good friends well nigh on for four year now; maybe it once was new, and didn't think as how the time 'ud ever come when it 'ud cover such a poor old hulk as me: maybe *I* didn't think as I should ever come to *want* to keep a bit o' scarecrow stuff like that. But we be old friends now, and times be changed along o' we: and there beant much difference to choose between us now. And seein' as how its kept the cold from bitin' into my old bones, and been the only cover Muster Reuben had when he were down wi' fever, I'm a goin' to keep it to the end, and have it put above me in the coffin, under the shadow of t' old church spire. But you mean well, sir, and thank 'ee kindly.

BEAUMER. Matthew, I will give you any amount of money for that coat.

MAT. Thank 'ee, sir, but doan't 'ee say no more. This 'ere coat beant for sale—nohow.

BEAUMER. Then lend it me, Matthew: lend it me for just ten minutes: you shall have it back again: I pwomise you.

MAT. Will ye promise that, sir?

BEAUMER. Yes, yes, I pwomise. Look here—take it off—there, that's it—here, put this one on instead. (*Takes his own coat off and*

gives it to Matthew.) That's splendid—(*feels in pocket*). It is all wight —they are there—I feel them—they are all wight. Back again soon.

[*Exit* BEAUMER.

MAT. That there Muster Beaumer, he do make me laugh, surely: he were allus a rum 'un. But (*looking at Beaumer's coat*) what be I to do wi' this 'ere coat?

SIR H. Keep it on your back, Matthew, until he comes back. I dare say he knows what he is about, though it's more than I do. And so, Matthew, you have stuck to Mr. Harleigh through everything.

MAT. I ain't done no more nor my duty, Sir Harry. It warn't nateral as I should stay at home, and let the young measter go out by himself among they furreners—and some on 'em be powerful handy wi' their pistols and knives.

SIR H. And so you went to protect him, eh, Matthew?

MAT. Not as I were o' much use;—but sometimes, out in they prairie camps, when I sees 'em all a drinkin' and quarrellin'—and him a settin' by quiet, thinkin' of t' old pleace here—I says, keep yer eye on 'em, for he's the young measter just the same, if so be as he is poor; and if they pints their bloody lookin' weppons at him, maybe you'll take care as the bullets doant get no further than your old carcase, I says. That be all the good you'll ever do, I says.

SIR H. You taught those fellows, who stayed behind, a lesson that they haven't forgotten yet.

MAT. Lor' love 'ee, sir, it warnt their fault. They lads was eddicated, and the young measter didn't seem same loike to them as to I.

SIR H. But, Matthew, have you had any supper?

MAT. Supper, sir! Lor' love 'ee, I doant want no supper, sir. But Muster Reuben there——

SIR H. Yes, I'll look after him. Wouldn't two or three slices of cold roast beef go down well, Matthew?

MAT. Lor' no, sir, I ain't so—but Muster Reuben, he be——

SIR H. And a jug of old home-brewed to wash it down?

MAT. (*Hesitatingly.*) No, sir, I—I doant think—maybe the young measter——

SIR H. And then a pipe and a glass of toddy as a nightcap.

MAT. Well—but—(*breaking down.*) But will ye gi' the young measter some too.

SIR H. I'll see to him. (*Rings bell: enter servant.*) Take this old man into the hall: put him in a place of honour: treat him with respect, and see he wants for nothing.

MAT. Doant 'ee forget the young measter, sir, will 'ee?

SIR H. No, no: I'll take good care of him.

MAT. Thank 'ee, sir: doant let him worry and fret no more, Sir Harry. Tell him it 'll all come right, sir—do 'ee: I know it will.

SIR H. Yes, Matthew, it will all come right.

MAT. Thank 'ee, sir, God bless 'ee, and thank 'ee kindly.

[*Exeunt* MATTHEW *and* SERVANT.

SIR H. And you didn't succed in making your fortune, Harleigh?

HARLEIGH. No, Sir Harry: but I don't complain. I want work—I don't care what.

SIR H. There'll be no need for work like that. Miss Douglas has never forgotten you: she loves you as she always did: but we have all thought you dead.

HARLEIGH. Don't talk of that, Sir Harry: I don't mean ever to see her again. It would not be right, and—no, don't talk of that.

SIR H. But it would be right: it is the only thing that is right, and no one could say a word against it.

HARLEIGH. No, no, it can never be: that dream is over—long ago.

SIR H. Do you not love her still?

HARLEIGH. Love her still? Do I not love her still? Do you ask me this—can you doubt it? For these four years my only thoughts have been of her—each mile that has lain between us has been a chain of bondage and a link of love, for, while it separated, it but bound me closer to her heart. In the awful solitude of the vast prairie I have heard her gentle voice—I have heard it above the crackling of the thunder, and the deluge of the rain. The hope of being able to take her to my heart again at last has been both meat and drink to me, when I have not known where to get a meal. I left her only that I might return to her with the right to claim her love: I return without that right, and the hope of ever having it is as dead as if my body were lying at the bottom of the ocean. Hope is dead—but I love her still—I love her more than ever: that will never die while Reuben Harleigh lives.

SIR H. Harleigh, forgive me if I say that you are wrong. The old man loved you as a son, and Maggie has never ceased to think of you and mourn your loss. It casts a shadow over their lives: you are more to them than all the world besides. Would you thus be the cause of sorrow to them, when you have it in your power to give such happiness? Seen in this light, what you persuade yourself to be your duty becomes mere pride—false pride.

HARLEIGH. She is rich and I am a beggar. (*A sound of cheering is heard from the rustics in the hall.*) Hark! What is that?

SIR H. They are giving Matthew a welcome in the hall. Harleigh,

listen to me, and such a welcome shall be yours as well.

HARLEIGH. No, no, don't tempt me: the bitterness for them is past. I am dead. (*After a pause.*) Sir Harry, you love her too: I heard you tell her so the other night. I was there behind you: and I heard you ask her to be your wife. Why should you make this sacrifice for me? With you she will be safe—safe from the perils for which her father's death would pave the way. If I knew that she were safe with you, I could almost say, "I am content." As for me ——

SIR H. What would become of you?

HARLEIGH. I should go back again to the New World—I should work hard for years, until I could buy back the dear old home, and then perhaps I should return, to end my days where I was born

SIR H. You would go back, without a friend—with no one who could talk with you of the old place here?

HARLEIGH. Out there, Sir Harry, there are warm hearts too, who know the old land well, and who are suffering in exile as I should be. There was one man there who saved both our lives, when we were starving on the prairie. He was alone—had lived alone for years, with the chance companionship of travellers and cowboys. He wept like a child when we spoke to him of old England. He died before we left—died in my arms of fever, after I had nearly nursed him back to life; and under his pillow, after death, I found his will—a common sheet of paper, with two cowboys as witnesses. All that he had he left to me.

SIR H. Then you are not without something, Harleigh.

HARLEIGH. He had nothing much beyond a shovel and a pickaxe, that he worked with in the mines: still it says "everything that is mine, I give to Reuben Harleigh." Poor Douglas!

SIR H. (*Starting.*) Douglas did you say—Douglas?

HARLEIGH. Yes; I think it was the name that made me care for him so much.

SIR H. What was his other name?

HARLEIGH. Herrick—Herrick Douglas.

SIR H. Good Heavens! Herrick? It must be the same.

HARLEIGH. His father had refused to recognize him because he had married against his will: his wife had died the year before: and——

SIR H. It *is* the same. Thank Heaven, it will all come right at last. When is the will dated?

HARLEIGH. A year and a half ago. See, here it is: I kept it in *his* memory. Why do you ask?

SIR H. (*Excited.*) Harleigh, what would you do if you were to become wealthy beyond all expectation, and Maggie Douglas were

to be as poor again as when you told her of your love?

HARLEIGH. What would I do? If she were free, I would travel night and day, until I saw her once again—tell her again the same old tale of love—so old, yet ever fresh—tell her how vain and empty was my wealth to me without the priceless treasure of her love. I would barter all—to the last farthing—to hear again the music of her voice: I would—oh, why do you torture me like this? Why conjure up a dream that ends in such a hideous nightmare as the cold reality?

SIR H. Because I believe it is no dream: I believe it is a fact.

HARLEIGH. (*Breathlessly.*) What do you mean?

SIR H. Herrick Douglas' father died three years and a half ago, leaving no will. At the time your friend made his will, leaving you all he had, he was entitled to £100,000.

HARLEIGH. Is—is—this true?

SIR H. Every word of it. I swear it.

HARLEIGH. Who has the money now? Not—not—Maggie's father?

SIR H. Yes: he was thought to be next of kin. The knowledge of a son living was known only to two scoundrels, who kept it a secret for their own ends.

HARLEIGH. (*Almost fainting.*) This is too much now—I cannot bear it.

SIR H. Cheer up, man! Courage! It is hope—life—happiness—love—everything that is dear to you. Don't let prosperity turn your brain.

HARLEIGH. Men have been driven mad by hearing of their pardon on the scaffold, when the rope is round their neck. The rope has been very tight for me, Sir Harry.

SIR H. Hush! Keep calm: here is Maggie. Go in here: let me break the news to her gently: let me tell her all. (*Pushes* HARLEIGH *off. Aside.*) Now for the hardest part of all.

[*Enter* MAGGIE *and* DOUGLAS. DOUGLAS *is very weak indeed; they help him to a chair.*]

DOUGLAS. Sir Harry, we have come to make a very strange request:—we come to take advantage of your generosity.

SIR H. All that I can do is but a poor return for what Miss Douglas would have done for me. I know what you would ask of me, Mr. Douglas. I read it in both your faces. Miss Douglas has given her love once: she cannot give it again. She wishes to be released.

DOUGLAS. (*Fatteringly.*) In a little time, Sir Harry—a year perhaps

—six months—or even ——

SIR H. No. Not in six months—not in a year—nor in a hundred years.

DOUGLAS and MAGGIE. Sir Harry!

SIR H. Miss Douglas, I was never worthy of your love: perhaps I should deserve instead your hate.

MAGGIE. Oh, no.

SIR H. Hear me out, please. Someday you will know all—it may be very soon: and then I may seem too despicable to have ever asked your hand. When you know all, be merciful: for I was weak, and the temptation strong.

DOUGLAS. Sir Harry, what has happened?

MAGGIE. Don't speak like this: you frighten me.

SIR H. You ask for your release: will you give me your forgiveness in exchange?

MAGGIE. Sir Harry, I have nothing to forgive.

SIR H. You may have:—say that you forgive me *all*.

MAGGIE. Sir Harry, I forgive you freely—all, whatever be the need of it.

SIR H. Thank you—thank you. I release you from your promise: you are free again. Now, wait a moment more: I have not done yet. In byegone days, on New Year's Eve, our forefathers would sit around the blazing hearth, and tell each other tales of love and chivalry. In days to come, this simple tale of faith and hope shall bring the tears to eyes of children yet unborn. There was once an old man, and his daughter—types of all all that one reveres in age and youth. The daughter loved an honest-hearted man, who left her lest the world should throw it in her teeth that he had married her for money—left her, and went to make his fortune in a far-off land.

DOUGLAS. (*Uneasily.*) Sir Harry, please ——

SIR H. He left her in the summer, and three winters passed away: and no word came to cheer and strengthen her. A rumour reached the village that he was dead. Still she was true.

MAGGIE. (*Pitifully.*) Sir Harry, don't, please ——

SIR H. Then came another suitor for her hand. Her father thought he was an honourable man: and to please her father, and to give him peace of mind, she gave this suitor her consent—but not her love: that was already given beyond recall.

DOUGLAS. Sir Harry—Maggie—don't sob so.

SIR H. They married, and years after the old true love returned.

MAGGIE. (*In agony.*) No, no! Oh, no! Ah! What is this?

Why do you look so strange? You know something: oh, tell me, tell me—quick. Reuben—Reuben—is—not dead: ah! He is alive!!

[*Enter* REUBEN HARLEIGH.]

HARLEIGH. (*Behind her.*) Yes, Maggie, my own true love, he is alive and here.

MAGGIE. (*Throwing herself into his arms.*) Ah! Reuben! Reuben!

HARLEIGH. Thank God! Thank God!

MAGGIE. Oh, Reuben, it was no dream—no vision—no spirit that I saw. It was yourself—your own true self. Speak to me, Reuben: let me hear your voice again, that I may know it was no dream.

HARLEIGH. My darling—my own darling—how you have suffered for me.

MAGGIE. All suffering is forgotten: it is gone—all swallowed up in this.

[*Enter* MARKS *behind.*]

SIR H. Let me finish the story. The money that was thought to be her father's was rightly his. She had nothing, and he had everything. But that made no difference, and—there, I can tell no more. The rest is not yet lived.

MARKS. What is this? Would you cheat Mr. Douglas out his fortune? This is the most villainous plot I ever head of.

SIR H. The son of Herrick Douglas left all he had to Mr. Harleigh. The will is dated a year and a half ago, two years after his father's death had made him heir to all his father's wealth.

MARKS. It is conspiracy—a foul conspiracy—I'll not hear of it. You are all in league against me.

[*Enter* CAPTAIN BEAUMER *and* CARRIE.]

HARLEIGH. I was not aware that you had any interest in the matter.

MARKS. It is preposterous—monstrous:—it is more—it is dishonest. If such things are permitted to go on, the law will become a mere dead letter. I will not have it:—I protest:—I shall appeal.

HARLEIGH. (*Producing will.*) Do you doubt the legality of this document, attested by proper witnesses?

MARKS. I don't care two figs for your document. It is not worth the paper it is written on.

BEAUMER. (*Coolly.*) Weally—aw—yaas—I think it is.

MARKS. Hold your tongue, sir; you know nothing about it. I tell yon there is no evidence to show that the late Mr. Douglas ever had a son.

BEAUMER. (*Coolly.*) Weally—aw—yaas—I think there is.

MARKS. Perhaps, sir, you are in the conspiracy to aid your pauper friend;—perhaps you would have me believe that you have *seen* the evidence—perhaps your old coat has come back—perhaps you can produce it;—perhaps you can prove that I'm a liar and a swindler myself.

BEAUMER. (*Coolly*) Aw—perhaps I can.

MARKS. Beware how you speak, sir. I have witnesses that you have insinuated that I am a swindler. Prove your words, sir, or an action shall lie for defamation of character.

BEAUMER. (*Producing copy of letter.*) Aw—have you ever seen this letter before?

MARKS. (*Starting.*) Ha! How the ——? (*Recovering himself.*) Never, sir, never: that letter is a forgery. That letter was torn up and destroyed four years ago.

HARLEIGH. How do you know that?

BEAUMER. (*Producing pieces of paper.*) Because here are the original pieces.

MARKS. (*Dumfoundered.*) By "Coke on Lyttleton," who would have believed it? How did you come by those pieces, sir?

BEAUMER. Aw—I bought them.

MARKS. Bought them?

BEAUMER. Yaas—for half a cwown.

MARKS. The devil! Who sold them?

BEAUMER. Jerwemiah.

MARKS. Jerwemiah?

BEAUMER. Marks, why are you in the same situation that I was in when I saw that letter torn up? Can't guess, eh? Because you are up a twee.

SIR H. (*Pointing to door.*) Marks, you can go.

MARKS. Sir Harry—Mr. Harleigh—gentlemen: if you will allow me ——

SIR H. That will do. Go.

MARKS. Curse the luck! I'm gone.

[*Exit* MARKS.

(*A peal of bells is faintly heard in the distance.*)

DOUGLAS. (*In chair.*) Reuben, come here. (*Reuben goes to him: quietly and simply.*) Reuben, kiss me. (*Reuben stoops and kisses him on the forehead.*) Reuben lad, she has believed in you all these years.

BEAUMER. (*Coming forward, as in Act I.*) Aw—so have I.

HARLEIGH. (*As in Act I.*) Have what, Jack?

BEAUMER. Believed in you.

HARLEIGH. Of course you have, old fellow. I have believed in you.

BEAUMER. Have you? Weuben, I wather think I believe in myself now. But I want you to help me.

HARLEIGH. (*Significantly.*) What again?

BEAUMER. Eh!

HARLEIGH. No mistake, I mean;—sure you're in love, Jack?

BEAUMER. Yaas.

HARLEIGH, Do I know the lady?

BEAUMER. Yaas: verwy well.

HARLEIGH. Miss Maxton?

BEAUMER. Yaas—I——

HARLEIGH. — think so, eh, Jack?

BEAUMER. (*Emphatically.*) No—sure of it. (*Goes up with* CARRIE.)

MAGGIE. (*Suddenly.*) Hark!

(*Perfect silence while the church clock strikes twelve. On the last stroke the chimes ring out again nearer and faster. Rustics enter from hall, old* MATTHEW *at their head.*)

MAT. Muster Reuben, Muster Reuben! They be tellin' I as you be rich—powerful rich. Be it true, sir—be it true?

HARLEIGH. Yes, old friend—rich in everything.

MAT. Lor' love 'ee, sir—that be good news. Thank God for all! I ha' lived to see ye back again in t' old pleace, among old feaces. (*To men.*) Aye, lads, it is Home—Home—and there beant no pleace like that—nowheres. I knowed it 'ud all come right, Muster Reuben, I knowed it. (*Breaking into tears.*)

HARLEIGH. God bless you, Matthew: but for you, old friend, my bones might now be bleaching on an Australian prairie. The bond that binds the rich man to the poor—that banishes class hatred, and makes all recognize a common humanity, each in his own proper place, is ——

MAT. Eddication and rights?

MAGGIE. (*Taking Reuben's hand.*) No. Faith and Love.

(*Music strikes up. Bells ring loud, as if the sound were borne on the breeze. Rustics dance. General tableau, &c.*

[CURTAIN.]